

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

I. SAMUEL.

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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

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I. SAMUEL.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

THE WRITER OF THE HISTORY.—Ichabod! the glory was gone; the palladium of truth and liberty was departed from Israel; chaos and confusion covered the land. Who has told the tale of these hundred years of shame, of sorrow, and of triumph? He made his purpose clear in writing this short history of the "No-Glory" when faith, cut loose, as it was in his days, from the ancient moorings, drifted on a sea of uncertainty, till it was at last piloted back to its anchorage of safety by Samuel and David. He has written on the forefront of his work that this undoing of an evil past was his object and plan. Who was he? A soldier would have written as he writes; a prophet, retired to one of the schools of Samuel, would have touched as lightly as he does on their sins and failings. He is no mere annalist writing bald chronicles and genealogies at a king's court. The dew of eternal youth glistens on his pages. To conceive the writer as a soldier-prophet, like Gad, who followed David in his flight from Saul, who took part in his campaigns and knew intimately the secrets of his court and camp, but retired to some calm and holy sanctuary, where he might spend the evening of life in the way a pious and veteran soldier would like to do, meets nearly all the requirements for fixing the authorship of this history. Who, then, best meets the requirements? It is not difficult to say. Sometimes in these memories—for such the history is—situations occur in which no one but David could have recounted the events set down. He was the only survivor of the anointing scene (1 Sam. xvi.), and fear of Saul would have held back both Samuel and Jesse from committing it to writing. Of the journey to Saul's court, the return home, and the fight with Goliath there are many touches whereof he alone knew; and knew so well that the idea of a reader misapprehending his words did not enter his mind. The same thing is true of the plots formed against his life, and revealed to him by Michal and Jonathan. And who but David himself would or could have written out the stories told of his life among the Philistines, of his last interview with Jonathan, of his speeches and appeals to Saul, of his feelings towards Nabal and Abigail, and of his midnight conversation with Abishai in Saul's camp? It is questionable if any one but the King would have had the courage to recount his sins in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, his repentance, and the terrible doom that befell his household. Of 106 Hebrew pages in the two books of Samuel, David could have written, as no other man could, 78 pages from his personal knowledge of facts; while of the remaining 28 he could have derived his knowledge, as no other man could, from those most intimately concerned with the history, Samuel and Jonathan. It is round David that nearly the whole history of this period of "No-Glory" may be said to turn, and the charm of a poet's pen is felt on every page of the narrative. But probability does not rise to certainty here. That he was the writer of this history involves no serious difficulty, while it clears away not a few. The work bears the stamp of David's hand and heart; and the manuscript may have been entrusted to his friend and counsellor, Nathan the prophet, a more likely view than to suppose that Nathan or Gad wrote the book. (*The Temple Bible*.) The Jews universally believed that the early portion of the First Book, down to the end of the twenty-fourth chapter, was written by Samuel, but on what grounds that belief rested is unknown; while the remainder of the first, and the whole of the second book, they ascribed to Nathan and Gad, founding this opinion on 1 Chron. xxix. 29. Modern scholars, however, are divided about the matter, some supposing that the statements in Chron. ii. 26; iii. 1, indicate the hand of the judge himself, or a contemporary; while others think that 1 Sam. v. 5; v. 18, xii. 5; xxx. 25, also ix. 9 (Thenius); 2 Sam. iv. 3; vi. 8; xviii. 18;

xxi. 2, that its composition must be referred to a later age. It is highly probable, however, that, these supposed marks of an after period were interpolations of Ezra (Eichhorn). In fact, there is strong internal evidence that these two books were in existence and well known in the ancient church before either Kings or Chronicles were published, for in both of the latter a variety of circumstances are contained, which are evidently derived from the book of Samuel. The old Jewish opinion which ascribes the greater part of the first book to the prophet is likely to stand. (*Robert Jamieson, D.D.*)

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL PROBABLY ORIGINAL AND INDEPENDENT COMPOSITIONS.—In advancing a single step beyond the songs of the Book of Samuel, we enter into the region of conjecture as to the materials which were at the command of the author. . . . The truthful simplicity and extraordinary vividness of some portions of the Book of Samuel naturally suggest the idea that they were founded on contemporary documents or a peculiarly trustworthy tradition. . . . On the other hand, it is to be remembered that vividness of description often depends more on the discerning faculties of the narrator than on mere bodily presence. "It is the mind that sees," so that 200 years after the meeting of the long Parliament a powerful imaginative writer shall portray Cromwell more vividly than Ludlow, a contemporary who knew him and conversed with him. Moreover, Livy has described events of early Roman history which educated men regard in their details as imaginary; and Defoe and Swift and the authors of the Arabian Nights have described events which all men admit to be imaginary with such seemingly authentic details, with such a charm of reality, movement, and spirit, that it is only sometimes by a strong effort of reason that we escape from the illusion that the narratives are true. In the absence, therefore, of any external evidence on this point, it is safer to suspend our judgment as to whether any portion of the Book of Samuel is founded on the writing of a contemporary, or on a tradition entitled to any peculiar credit. (*W. Smith, D.D.*)

MEANING OF THE TITLE.—The title Samuel does not denote authorship, but, like the titles Joshua, Ruth, and Esther, commemorates the prominent actor in the events recorded in the book. Its adaptation shows a true insight into the connexion of the history it contains. . . . The second Book of Samuel must seem a strange title for a book of which not a line was written by Samuel, and in which his name is not once mentioned, unless these two considerations are borne in mind: (1) that the division of the book into two parts is not original, (2) that Samuel's direct work really reaches all through the book. (*A. F. Kirkpatrick, M.A.*)

DATE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.—There are some indications as to the date of the work, and yet no precision is attainable. Evidence on this head is either external or internal. The earliest undeniable external evidence of the existence of the book would seem to be the Greek translation of it in the Septuagint. The exact date, however, of the translation itself is uncertain, though it must have been made at some time between the translation of the Pentateuch in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, who died B.C. 247, and the century before the birth of Christ. The next best external testimony is that of a passage in the second Book of Maccabees (ii. 13), in which it is said of Nehemiah that "he founding a library, gathered together the acts of the kings, and the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts." Now, although this passage cannot be relied on for proving that Nehemiah himself did, in fact, ever found such a library, yet it is good evidence to prove that the "Acts of the Kings" were in existence when the passage was written; and it cannot reasonably be doubted that this phrase was intended to include the Book of Samuel, which is equivalent to the two first books of Kings in the Septuagint. Hence there is external evidence that the Book of Samuel was written before the Second Book of Maccabees. The passage in 1 Chron. xxix. 29, seems likely to prove externally that the Book of Samuel was written before the Chronicles. This is not absolutely certain, but it seems to be the most natural inference from the words that the history of David, first and last, is contained in the history of Samuel, the history of Nathan, and the history of Gad. For as a work has come down to us entitled Samuel, which contains an account of the life of David till within a short

period before his death, it appears most reasonable to conclude (although this point is open to dispute) that the writer to the Chronicles referred to this work by the title *History of Samuel*. In this case, admitting the date assigned, on internal grounds, to the Chronicles by a modern Jewish writer of undoubted learning and critical powers, there would be external evidence for the existence of the Book of Samuel earlier than 247 B.C., though not earlier than 312 B.C., the era of the Seleucidæ. If, however, instead of looking solely to the external evidence, the internal evidence respecting the Book of Samuel is examined, there are indications of its having been written some centuries earlier. (*Wm. Smith, D.D.*)

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOKS.—Samuel differs in a marked degree from Judges and Kings in the absence of a regular chronological scheme. It is evident, however, that the period covered by the book is practically equivalent to the long life of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. xxviii. 14), with David's reign of forty years in addition, in all rather more than a hundred years. This is confirmed by the repeated references to the descendants of Eli, of whom we can trace no fewer than five generations, ending with the youthful Jonathan, the son of Abiathar (1 Sam. xiv. 3, xxii. 18, 2 Sam. xv. 27). For the later part of this period we have the trustworthy editorial note, 2 Sam. v. 4 f., and several invaluable data in 2 Sam. xiii ff. Assuming that Solomon reigned from 970 B.C. (cf. Skinner's tables in his *Kings*), David ascended the throne of Judah in 1010, and that of all Israel 1003-02. Since Amnon and Absalom, both born before 1003 (see 2 Sam. iii. 2), are grown up in ch. xiii, we may place the episode of this chapter *circa* 985. Between this point and Absalom's rebellion eleven years elapsed (xiii. 23, 38, xiv. 28, xv. 27 marg.), bringing us down to *circa* 974. In the following four years will fall the incidents of the Great Rebellion, Sheba's abortive insurrection (ch. xx), and the events of 1 Kings i, a period of time by no means too large (note the change in David, 1 Kings i. 1). As regards the reign of Saul we are less fortunate. The chronological scheme in 1 Samuel. xiii. 1 has unfortunately been left a blank. Since the estimate of David's forty years' reign (2 Sam v. 4 f.) has just proved itself correct, the accompanying statement that he was thirty years of age at his accession must also be accepted. Now if we assume that Jonathan was approximately of the same age—he must have been, by a few years, the elder of the two—and bear in mind that he was at least from eighteen to twenty years of age at the beginning of his father's reign (1 Sam. xiii. 2), we are compelled to limit that reign to some fifteen years at most, from $\pm$ 1025—1010. For the preceding period the materials for a trustworthy estimate are entirely wanting. It can only be said that the birth of Samuel must fall somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1080—75 B.C. (*The Century Bible*.)

THE ANTIQUITY OF THE BOOKS.—The high antiquity of the books of Samuel, or of the sources whence they were principally derived, in comparison with that of the Kings and Chronicles, appears from the absence of reference to older sources or authorities in the former, such as is frequently made in the latter. It hence appears that the compiler did not live at any great distance from the events which he relates, and therefore does not deem it needful to refer his readers to sources already known to them; whilst the original sources have for the most part all the marks of having been written by persons contemporaneous with the events described. There is little reason for supposing that any part of the work was composed even so late as subsequently to the division of the kingdom. For the expression "Israel and Judah," which is claimed as proof of an origin after the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam, has no such force, as must be obvious from 11 Sam. ii. 4, 9, 10, 17, 28; xviii. 6, 7, 16; xix., 9, compared with 12, 15, 16, from which it is clear that the phrase, if not already in use, originated in the circumstances that at first only the tribe of Judah adhered to David, whilst the remaining tribes under the common name of Israel formed a separate kingdom for seven and a half years under Ishbosheth, and afterwards for a short time under Absalom. With this claim to high antiquity, the internal evidence so far as it goes entirely agrees. (*P. Fairbairn, D.D.*)

THE SOURCES FROM WHICH THE BOOKS ARE A COMPILATION.—What were these sources? Ingenious attempts have been made to analyse the component parts

of the book. But apart from these conjectural theories we have several indications of the sources from which the compiler drew his materials. 1. The chief sources were probably contemporary prophetic histories. The compiler of the Book of Chronicles (probably Ezra) expressly names as the original authority for the history of David's reign "the Chronicle (lit. words) of Samuel the seer and the Chronicle of Nathan the prophet, and the Chronicle of Gad the seer." It has been maintained that Samuel, Nathan and Gad were the subjects, not the authors, of the works referred to. Even if this was so, it is evident that they contained much valuable material for the history of David's reign. . . . It has also been maintained that the works referred to by the compiler of Chronicles actually were the present book of Samuel. But it is evident that the document which he was using contained much more than these books, while at the same time certain sections of Samuel, and Chronicles, agree almost verbally. The most natural conclusion is that both compilers drew from the same authority. If, then, the Book of Samuel was compiled largely from the Chronicles of Samuel, Nathan and Gad, supplemented by other records preserved in the Schools of the Prophets, it follows that it rests upon the best possible authority. Samuel is the historian of his own life-time, which included the greater part of Saul's reign: Nathan and Gad together give the history of David's reign. The events of David's life must have been familiarly known in the Schools of the Prophets of Ramah. An incidental notice suggests that Gad was the medium of communication between the college at Ramah and David during his outlaw life; both Gad and Nathan appear to have occupied official positions in David's court; and both appear his monitors in important crises in his life. To Nathan we probably owe the full history of David's sin and repentance; to Gad may be due the account of the Numbering of the People and its consequences. 2. The Chronicles of King David, 1 Chron. xxvii., 24. which appear from this allusion to have been of the nature of statistical state records, may have been consulted. From them may have been derived the formal summaries of wars such as are given in 2 Sam. viii. 1-15, and lists of officials such as those in 2 Sam. viii. 6-8; xx. 23-26; xxiii. 8-39. 3. Express mention is made in 1 Sam. x. 25. of the fact that Samuel committed to writing the "charter of the kingdom," and "laid it up before the Lord," possibly as an addition to the book of the law. 4. "The national poetic literature" was laid under contribution, 1 Sam. ii. 1-10, 2 Sam. iii. 33-34, 2 Sam. xxii., 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7., 2 Sam. i. 18-27. 5. Oral tradition may perhaps have supplied some particulars. (*A. F. Kirkpatrick, M.A.*)

COMPARISON OF THE CIVIL WITH THE CHURCH HISTORY OF THE HEBREWS.—Although the Civil history of the Hebrews was more closely mixed up with their Church history than is usual in modern nations, it is plain that some even of their historical books gave greater prominence to the one than to the other. In a churchman's view priests, Levites, and Nethinim or Temple serfs stood out for special mention and special honour. Elkanah, the father of Samuel, was, as we learn from the Book of Chronicles, a Levite of the Kohathite clan, closely connected with and living a few miles from Shiloh; but his presence there bulked so little in the eyes of the writer of Samuel, or was esteemed so much a matter of course, that we cannot be certain whether his yearly visit to the town was on the occasion of one of the great feasts, or for the discharge of his duties as a Levite in attendance on the priests at the Tabernacle. A Church historian would have been more definite. The narrative in Samuel is Civil history more than Church history. In the book of Chronicles, again, David's second attempt to bring up the ark to Jerusalem is successful because he did not repeat the mistake of moving it on a cart (1 Chron. xv. 2-18). This minute detail of ritual is found in the Church history of Chronicles, while in the Civil history of Samuel it has to be inferred, but is not directly mentioned. Samuel and his two sons are known to have been Levites; but, though judges in the land, and no one was reckoned more honourable or more worthy or more likely to rule than they, they are never called priests. Nor is there the slightest evidence that Samuel ever consulted the Lord about Saul or David's affairs by Urim and Thummim, although priests, who were not true high priests, repeatedly did so, and with satisfactory results. Samuel was called the seer or the prophet; he was also a Levite, but he was not a priest, and is never so called. Between the priests of the Tabernacle, and Levites like Samuel, his

father and his sons, there was an impassable official barrier in the days of No-Glory. Surely there are grounds sufficient in a Civil history, so brief and compact as the First Book of Samuel, for recognising, as underlying it, the Books of Moses. Without them the history in Samuel is unintelligible from beginning to end. In the Book of Samuel the gorgeous veils of the palace-tent of Jehovah are passed over in silence where they might have been spoken of; but after a silence of more than a thousand years, comes, from a Church history of the day, a reminder of what was first made in the time of Moses, "he made the veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen" (2 Chron. iii. 14). (*The Temple Bible*.)

THE RELATION OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL TO THE PENTATEUCH.—In the unsettled times of the judges the observance of the ritual enjoined in the books of Moses had fallen greatly into disuse. The Pentateuch seems to exert little influence on the habits of the people as described in Samuel, or on the ideas and language of the writers. There are, indeed, fewer allusions to Moses and his writings in Samuel than in any other of the early books of Scripture. But this may, doubtless, be in part accounted for by the disorganised and somewhat anomalous state into which matters fell in consequence of the capture of the ark by the Philistines, and the essentially new era which was shortly afterwards introduced by the institution of the kingdom, with the stirring events that followed in the personal histories of Saul and David. The name of Moses occurs fifty-six times in Joshua, in Judges three, in Samuel two, in Kings ten, in Chronicles thirty-one. The law of Moses is never once named in Samuel. (*P. Fairbairn, D.D.*)

THE RELATION OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL TO THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.—It can scarcely be maintained that the author of the Chronicles has derived from the books of Samuel all the materials for the narratives which are common to both works. There are so many variations between the history as related by the Chronicler and as related in Samuel as to render it probable, not that the Chronicler derived everything from Samuel, but that he had access to the sources used also by the compiler of Samuel. This may be explained by a comparison of 2 Sam. v. 1-10 and xxiii. 8-39 with 1 Ch. xi. xii. The Chronicler has placed in continuous narrative David's anointing as King of Israel at Hebron, the capture of Jerusalem, the building of the city of David, and the list of David's heroes with their deeds, probably as he found them connected in the documents which he used; whilst in Samuel they are detached, the list of heroes being placed separately in the history of the latest period of the life of David. So in 1 Ch. iii., the list of David's children is given in a form probably drawn from some official register to which the writer of Samuel had access, as he gives the list in two portions, to suit the course of his narrative, 2 Sam. iii. 2, 5; v. 14-16. (*P. Fairbairn, D.D.*)

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL AND THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES COMPARED.—Much that is contained in Samuel is omitted in Chronicles, and much of the information in Chronicles is supplementary to the narrative of Samuel. . . . In general the compiler of the Book of Samuel gives a history of David's reign with special reference (1) to the vicissitudes through which he was raised to be the head of a mighty kingdom; (2) to matters of, comparatively speaking, private interest in his life; (3) to the chastisements by which he was punished for his sin. He thus portrays David the man as well as David the king. The compiler of Chronicles gives prominence (1) to all matters of religious ceremonial, calling special attention to the agency of the Priests and Levites; (2) to the chief steps in the rise and progress of David's kingdom, omitting the reverses which from time to time checked its growth. These differences correspond remarkably to the age and object of the two historians. The unknown compiler of Samuel was undoubtedly a prophet, and his narrative is penetrated by a prophetic spirit. He drew up, no long time after the events, a narrative of the foundation of the Theocratic Monarchy, selecting such matter as illustrated God's providential dealings with the king he had chosen. The Book of Chronicles was written after the return from captivity. . . . Its purpose is didactic rather than historical, and its tone, in accordance with the profession of the author, priestly rather than prophetic. (*A. F. Kirkpatrick, M.A.*)

DAVID'S REIGN.—The main results of David's reign may be summed up as follows:—1. He consolidated the tribes into a nation, binding together the discordant elements of which it was composed into a vigorous unity, not without struggles and opposition. Short as was the duration of this unity, it gave a new strength and new aspirations to Israel. 2. By his conquests he secured to Israel the undisputed possession of its country, thereby ensuring the free field which was indispensable for the expansion and development of the nation, and through it of the true religion which had been entrusted to its guardianship. In these two points Saul had to some extent anticipated him, and made his success possible. 3. But the noblest result of David's work was the harmonious union of all the highest influences for good which were at work in the nation. For once the religious and the secular powers acted in perfect co-operation, each contributing to the other's efficiency. David, though not without relapses and failures, on the whole realised the ideal, and was Israel's greatest, because truest, king. 4. His reign was always looked back to as the golden age of the nation, the type of a still more glorious age, to which the national hope looked forward as the crown and consummation of its destiny. (*A. F. Kirkpatrick, M.A.*)

CONTENTS OF THE BOOKS.—The prominent, dominant idea is "The Kingdom" : its matter, manner, renewal, and rending; its translation from Saul the Apostate, its deliverance from Absalom the Usurper, and its establishment in the hands of David. The name "Messiah" is first found here (1 Sam. ii. 10, Hebrew). The narrative abounds in suggestions.

1. POETICAL RETRIBUTION finds examples in Saul's history; also in David's, whose great sin brought corrective punishment in its own line, in the death of the child of his crime, and the incest of Amnon and Absalom.

2. IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE is enforced. David's attempt to bring up the ark on a cart issued in the death of Uzzah; three months later he had it borne on the shoulders of the Levites, as God had directed.

3. GODLY REPENTANCE IS ILLUSTRATED. The guilt of adultery, treachery, and murder lay heavy on David. Nathan's parable of the ewe-lamb touched the spring of godly sorrow which overflows in Psalm li.

4. GRACE finds illustration in David's treatment of Absalom and Mephibosheth, and in the arrested judgment at Araunah's threshing-floor, which became the site of the Temple with its Altar of Atonement. (*Arthur T. Pierson, D.D.*)

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I. SAMUEL.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 2—7. **And he had two wives.**—*The folly of polygamy*:—Abraham's domestic peace was embittered, so that he was at length compelled to dismiss Hagar; and Jacob saw much strife arise amongst his household whose interest polygamy had divided. It is probable that the same feeling which operated with Abraham for taking Hagar influenced Elkanah in taking Peninnah, for Hannah seems to have been the first wife. There was doubtless an impatient desire of children; but in this case, as in those already alluded to, Elkanah's deviation from the original law of marriage, though in a manner then tolerated, conduced not at all to his domestic peace and comfort. (*T. E. Redwar, M.A.*) *Polygamy not primeval*:—There can have been no polygamy when as yet there was only a single pair, or when there were several single pairs widely separated from each other. The presumption, if not the certainty, therefore, is that primeval man must have been monogamous. It is a presumption supported by the general equality of the sexes in respect to the numbers born, with only just such an excess of the male sex as tends to maintain that equality against the greater risks to life arising out of manly pursuits and duties. Thus the facts of Nature point to polygamy as in all probability a departure from the habits of primeval times. (*Argyll, Unity of Nature.*) **The name of the one was Hannah.** *Hannah the matron*:—Outraged and disgraced by the crimes of its ministers, religion sank into public contempt, and, almost mortally "wounded in the house of its friends," seemed ready to expire. At first indignant, and in the end demoralised, the people deserted the house of God, and abandoned the profession of a religion which the crimes of its priests had made to stink in their nostrils. "Wherefore," alluding to Hophni and Phinehas, it is said, "Wherefore the sin of the young men was great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." But even in those days God did not leave himself without a witness. There were some who felt that His, like other good causes, has never more need of support than when it is betrayed by its supporters. Such an act closed the life of Colonel Gardiner, the grand old Christian soldier, who, deserted by his own regiment on the fatal field of Prestonpans, and seeing a handful of men without an officer bravely maintaining the fight, spurred his horse through a shower of bullets to place himself at their head, and fall a sacrifice to truth and loyalty. Such an act also was the women's who openly followed our Lord with tears when no disciple had the courage to show his face in the streets. We cannot perhaps apply to the father of Samuel and husband of Hannah the saying, "Faithful among the faithless only he"; yet to Elkanah certainly belongs the honour of resisting the current of popular opinion, and, in an age of all but universal defection, clinging to the cause and the house of God. When its ministers had brought dishonour on the service of God, and their crimes had made the people abhor it, he felt that there was the more need for him to stand by it. He was not the man to desert the ship. To divine grace, his steadfastness to duty against the popular influence and amid almost universal defection was mainly due. Yet I cannot doubt, that in the bold and faithful part he acted, Elkanah owed much to Hannah. When adherence to principle involved painful sacrifices, men have found such support in gentle women as I have seen the green and pliant ivy lend the wall it clothed and clung to, when that, undermined or shaken, was ready to fall. Such was the spirit of Hannah. **I. HER PATIENCE**—"There is a skeleton in every house!" The grim monitor that stands in every house to teach us that unmingled pleasures are to be sought in heaven, Hannah found in hers. Happier than some that have been unequally yoked with unbelievers, she had a pious husband. Never was wife more prized and more loved than she. In what esteem Elkanah held her, how fondly he cherished her, and how kind he was to her, appears in the very strong and tender terms with

which he essays to soothe her grief, saying, "Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" As is indicated by that question, her great trial was to be childless. But her trial, like a wound into which cruel hands rub salt, or some other smarting thing, turning ordinary pain into intolerable torture, was greatly aggravated by the happier fortune and insolent reproaches of a rival. Elkanah was a polygamist. To his own misfortune, not less than to Hannah's, he had another wife besides her. In some kind and gentle women Hannah's misfortune would have excited feelings of sympathy. But the other wife, who had children—a rude, coarse, proud, and vulgar woman—turned it into an occasion for triumphing over her, and embittering all the springs of her life. In these circumstances—circumstances to which the adage, so generally true, applies with peculiar force, "Speech is silvern, but silence is golden"—Hannah teaches us how to bear our trials, whatever their nature be; and how to seek, and where to find relief.

II. HER MEEKNESS—A singular phenomenon has sometimes been noticed at sea. In a gale, when the storm, increasing in violence, has at length risen into a hurricane, the force of the wind has been observed to actually beat down the waves, producing a temporary and comparative calm; and similar is the effect occasionally produced by overwhelming trials—these, by their very power and pressure on the heart, abating both the violence and the expression of its feelings. But what is equally remarkable and still more observable in trials is, that we can more easily bear a heavy blow from God's hand than a light one from man's. Smarting under the cruel reproaches of her rival, to use the very words of Scripture, "in bitterness of soul," she lingers in the temple behind the rest, and there alone, as she supposed, pours out her tears and prayers before the Lord. His eyes dim as well as his head grey with years—Eli—too much accustomed in these evil times to see abandoned women—thought she was drunk; and more ready, like other indulgent fathers, to reprove sin in others than in his own sons, he addresses her sharply, saying, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." A very offensive accusation! Under such a charge, and in the rapid alternation with which the mind passes from one passion to another, who would have been astonished had her grief suddenly changed to anger? The meekness of Moses has become a proverb; and justly so. But did he, did any man or woman, ever show a milder, gentler, lovelier spirit, a more magnanimous example of how to suffer wrong, than Hannah? No wonder that Eli, perceiving the wrong he had done, should have turned his reproaches on himself; and touched with Hannah's grief, answered and said, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him."

III. HER FAITH—I know an island that stands crowned by its ancient fortalice in the middle of a lake, some good bow-shots from the shore. With the walls of the old ruin mantled in ivy, and its tower rising grim and grey above the foliage of hoary elms, it serves no purpose now but to recall old times and ornament a lovely landscape. But once that island and its stronghold were the refuge and life of those whose ordinary residence was the castle that, with gates, and bulwarks, and many a tower, and floating banner rose in baronial pride on the shore. When in the troublous times of old that was beleaguered, and its defenders could hold out no longer against the force and fury of the siege, they sought their boats, and, escaping by the postern gate over waters too deep to wade and too broad to swim, threw themselves on the island—within the walls of the stout old keep to enjoy peace in the midst of war, and safe beyond the shot of cross-bow, to laugh their enemies to scorn. In their hardest plight, and against the greatest numbers, this refuge never failed them. Such a refuge and relief his people find in God. Hence the confidence and bold language of the Psalmist, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my salvation: I shall not be greatly moved." Hence, also, in allusion to the security such strongholds offered in the East, as well as here, in olden times, the Bible says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous runneth, and is safe." And thus, as prayer is our way of access to God, and the means by which we place ourselves under His protection, it is a resource that never fails. There is no burden too heavy for the back of prayer to carry, nor wound too deep for its balm to

heal. Hannah sought her comfort in prayer. Let her case teach us that the way to get anything is first to get faith—"all things are possible to him that believeth." There are people, who claim to be philosophers, that laugh such hopes to scorn. According to them God leaves all events to the operation of what they call "the ordinary laws of nature," without guiding, controlling, or interfering with them in any way whatever. No wonder that with such views the Divine Being is to them neither an object of reverential worship nor of filial affection. How should they fear, or love God? Their God is a Sovereign, who, parting with his sceptre though he retains his crown, is denuded of all authority—a Father who, careless of their fate, casts his children out on the world, like the poor babe a guilty mother exposes, which, though it may perchance be pitied and protected by others, is cruelly forsaken by the author of its being. How dark and dreary such a philosophy! All nature, and every religion, Pagan as well as Christian, revolts against it. Some one has said of prayer, It moves the hand that moves the world. A grand truth! to a poor conscience-stricken sinner, to an alarmed soul, to an anxious, weary, trembling spirit, a truth more precious than all science and philosophy. Hannah believed it. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) **But Hannah had no children.**

—*Anomalies of Providence*:—Inside Elkanah's house we see two strange arrangements of Providence, of a kind that often moves our astonishment elsewhere. First, we see a woman eminently fitted to bring up children, but having none to bring up. On the other hand, we see another woman, whose temper and ways are fitted to ruin children, entrusted with the rearing of a family. In the one case a God-fearing woman does not receive the gifts of Providence; in the other case a woman of a selfish and cruel nature seems loaded with His benefits. In looking round us, we often see a similar arrangement of other gifts; we see riches, for example, in the very worst of hands; while those who from their principles and character are fitted to make the best use of them have often difficulty in securing the bare necessities of life. How is this? Does God really govern, or do time and chance regulate all? If it were God's purpose to distribute His gifts exactly as men are able to estimate and use them aright, we should doubtless see a very different distribution; but God's aim in this world is much more to try and to train than to reward and fulfil. All these anomalies of Providence point to a future state. What God does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. In many cases home affords a refuge from our trials, but in this case home was the very scene of the trial. There is another refuge from trial, which is very grateful to devout hearts—the house of God and the exercises of public worship. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Childless parents:—Abraham and Sarah had no children. Isaac and Rebekah had no children. Jacob and Rachel had no children. Manoa had no children. Hannah had no children. The Shunamite had no children. Zacharias and Elizabeth had no children. Till it came to be nothing short of a mark of a special election, and a high calling, and a great coming service of God in Israel to have no children. Time after time, till it became nothing short of a special Providence, those husbands and wives whose future children were predestinated to be patriarchs, and prophets, and judges, and forerunners of Jesus Christ in the house of Israel, began their married life having no children. Now, why was that? Well, we may make guesses, and we may propose reasons for that perplexing dispensation, but they are only guesses and proposed reasons. All the more—Why is it? Is it to spare and shield them from the preoccupation and the dispersion of affection, and from the coldness and the rudeness and the neglect of one another that so many of their neighbours suffer from? And is it to teach them a far finer tenderness, and a far rarer honour, and a far sweeter solicitude for one another? Or, on the other hand, is it out of pure jealousy on God's part? Is it that He may be able to say to them, Am I not better to thee than ten sons? Or again, is it in order to make them meet, long before His other sons and daughters around them are made meet, for that life in which they shall neither marry nor be given in marriage? Which of all these reasons, or what other reason, has their God for what He does with so many of His best saints? But all this time we have been intruding into those things of which He says to us—What is that to thee? And, then, those whose concern this is, and those who are deepest down in God's counsels, they are just the men and the women, they are just the husbands and the wives, who

will not once open their mouths to publish abroad to a world that fears not God what all this time God is doing for their souls. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship.—*The pilgrimage to Shiloh*:—Great personages are prepared for before they arrive. Our blessed Lord, the greatest of all personages who ever appeared on earth, was prepared for long before He came. In the first nineteen verses of this chapter we are told of the circumstances which prepared the way for Samuel, which led up to his birth. These preparations were made at a holy season, and in a holy place. These pilgrimages the men and boys among the Israelites were bidden in the law to make three times a year, at the great festivals. (*Deut. xvi. 16.*) But the time of the Judges was a lawless and irregular time, and probably the custom then crept in of going up only once a year to worship at the tabernacle. These yearly journeys to the place of public worship were not without difficulties and dangers. The country had no regular roads through it, or, at all events, no roads like ours—nothing but tracks of caravans, or companies of travellers who had gone that way before. It was not rid of wild beasts. Wolves and hyænas prowled about at night, and lions had their lair in the jungle which lined part of the course of the Jordan. Then there were robbers in the hill fastnesses, ever ready to pounce upon undefended travellers, and strip them of all they possessed, even to their clothes—a calamity which happened to the poor man in our Lord's parable, who was afterwards relieved by the good Samaritan. These pilgrimages of the Israelites to the place of God's worship ought to remind us of the pilgrimage on which we ourselves are, or ought to be, bound, and in which every day of our lives we ought to make some progress. We, too, are "going up" to God's heavenly temple. We are going up thither through the wilderness of this world. There are great dangers and difficulties to be encountered on the road. We have two great helps and comforts on our way. One is the society of people who are going the same road, who have the same hope before them of reaching the heavenly temple. The other help is the public worship of God upon earth, which is intended to keep ever fresh and alive in us the thought and desire of His heavenly worship. Ask yourself continually, and force your conscience to answer the questions, "Am I indeed going up to God's heavenly temple? Have I reason to think year by year that I am getting any nearer to it?" He who finds that he is not going up may assure himself that he is going down. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Ver. 7. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the House of the Lord, so she provoked her.—*The House of God*:—You must remember, that at the time when Elkanah was living, there was but one temple or church for all the worshippers of the true God; and those who lived at a great distance from this temple could not have the privilege of worshipping there, at most, above three times a year. Have you ever considered the mercy of being born in a country where there are so many places of public worship? places which have that honourable and blessed name of "the house of God"? When you draw near to a town, you see several of these precious buildings, higher than all the houses prepared for man to live in, beside many other smaller places of public worship: and you can scarcely find a village without some building in it, where the people of God may assemble together. Now, you observe, that pious Elkanah and his family have to take a long journey once a year, for the privilege of the public worship of God. What does all this say to you who have God's house standing open for you within a very, very little distance, perhaps within a few steps, and yet you think it too much trouble to get there! You would not treat a nobleman so, if he invited you to his house; particularly, if you were very dependent upon him; and if you saw him standing at the door of his house, watching to see who accepted his invitation, and who slighted it. I have heard many people say, "I can read my book at home, and I don't know but I get as much good as by going to church or meeting." But let me tell you, I do know that you cannot. If, indeed, you are confined at home by sickness, and your heart is right with God, He can and will be a little sanctuary to you, and will enable you to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want": but when you idly stay at home, from the idea that you can get as

much good there as in a place of public worship, you trample upon God's express command, and expect that which He has not promised. (*Helen Plumptre.*) *Hannah*:—To know persons completely, it is necessary to view them in various situations and conditions. Character is not only displayed by trials, but it very much results from them. Both prosperity and adversity are states of acknowledged temptation; and few can equally encounter such opposite dangers. *Hannah* first comes before us in circumstances of disappointment and mortification. Her affliction was aggravated by reproach, for "her adversary provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb." But who was this adversary? She was one of her own household, for *Elkanah*, her husband, had two wives. And in the case before us, was the conduct of *Elkanah* justified by the result? Let us read and see. In the days of *Malachi* this evil practice abounded; and observe how the prophet speaks of it. "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed." Here we find that marriage was originally confined to a single pair: and we see the reason. It was not from want of power or kindness in God. He could have made more than one *Eve* for *Adam*, and would have done it had his welfare required it. But it was because of the advantage derivable from individual union, especially with regard to the children who should arise from it, and be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. *Hannah's* adversary seems peculiarly unprincipled and ill-disposed. A noble mind is always generous and sympathising. If it possesses any exclusive advantages, it will not be forward to display and boast of them; and if it sees a fellow creature in a humbler situation, it will not labour to increase his sense of deficiencies, but rather to diminish and soften it. "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." But we may observe, that though envy loves to expose the defects of another, it springs from his excellencies or advantages, and feeds upon some real or imaginary privilege. Accordingly, we are here informed of the occasion of this woman's present malevolence. At this season *Elkanah* treated *Hannah* with peculiar attention and distinction. "And when the time was that *Elkanah* offered, he gave to *Peninnah* his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions; but unto *Hannah* he gave a worthy portion." There is a considerable difference between the feeling and the expression of partiality; the one is much more in our power than the other. The display of it is commonly prejudicial to the object. Who does not remember the "coat of many colours"? The blame we attach to a man is not always so much for acting wrong, as for bringing himself into circumstances and conditions which will hardly allow of his acting right. *Piety* says, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him. and He shall direct thy paths"; and *Prudence* says, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." *Elkanah* forgets this, and his folly fixes him in a state that leaves him not the possibility of escaping evil and reproach. What could *Peninnah* think of approaching the altar of the God of peace and love with a temper full of envy and malice, and a tongue "set on fire of hell"? How much better is omission than perversion, and neglect than inconsistency? Shall blessing and cursing proceed out of the same mouth? "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Year after year *Hannah* had been accustomed to bear all this provocation, and till now she seems to have endured it patiently. But where is the mind that always continues in one frame? (*W. Jay.*) *Womanly endurance*:—Patience is of two kinds. There is an active, and there is a passive endurance. The former is a masculine, the latter, for the most part, a feminine virtue. Female patience is exhibited chiefly in fortitude; in bearing pain and sorrow meekly without complaining. In the old Hebrew life female endurance shines almost as brightly as in any life which Christianity itself can mould. *Hannah* under the provocations and taunts of her rival, answering not again her husband's rebuke, humbly replying to *Eli's* unjust blame, is true to the type of womanly

endurance. For the type of man's endurance you may look to the patience of the early Christians under persecution. They came away from the Sanhedrim to endure and bear; but it was to bear as conquerors rushing on to victory, preaching the truth with all boldness, and defying the power of the united world to silence them. These two divers qualities are joined in One, and only One of woman born, in perfection. One there was in whom human nature was exhibited in all its elements symmetrically complete. (*F. W. Robertson.*) *Provocations in domestic life*:—A garden has a great many flowers in it. Some of them are weeds, some of them are purslane, and some of them are nettles, which are not very desirable for bouquets. In the garden, however, we can take our choice; but in the family we cannot. There we have to take all. If there is a complaining one, we have to take that one; if there is a weak and dull-eyed one, we have to take that one; if there is a moody and morose one, we have to take that one; and it takes but one bitter lemon to spoil the whole of your lemonade. If of half-a-dozen lemons five are perfectly good, and the other is bad, the whole mixture is bad; for the nature of this one bad lemon enters into it. So one person may spoil the pleasure of twenty. A mother may keep a cloud resting on the whole household from morning till night; thank God she sleeps at nights. A father may fret and worry the whole household; and therefore Paul says, "Fathers, provoke not your children." They are apt to make the children cross, or to create in them an unrestful, unquiet disposition. It does not take more than one smoky chimney in a room to make it intolerable. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *A religious use of annoyance*:—The remarkable thing is: A religious use of a daily provocation. Peninnah persecuted Hannah daily; laughed at her, mocked her. It was a religious use. She prayed unto the Lord; she rose up and went forward that she might pray mightily before God; she spake in her heart and she poured out her soul before God. That was conquest,—that was victory! There is a possibility of having a daily annoyance, and yet turning that daily annoyance into an occasion of nearer and nearer approach to God. Let us then endeavour to turn all our household griefs, family torments into occasions of profound worship and loving homage to God. It was in human nature to avenge the insult; to cry out angrily against the woman who delighted in sneering and in provoking. But there is something higher than human nature, something better. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 10, 11. And she was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord.—*The success of Hannah's prayer, and the reasons for it*:—1. Both Jacob's prayer and Hannah's prayer are very short. Hannah's consists of a single verse. It is quite clear that the much speaking has nothing to do with being heard. 2. Both Hannah's prayer and Jacob's were offered when the offerer was in trouble. Jacob was flying from the face of Esau. Now observe the wonderful graciousness and tenderness of God, that He makes a special promise to prayer offered up in distress, whether of mind, body, or estate. "Call upon me," says He, "in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Hannah mixed tears with her prayers, for she "prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." Christ mixed tears with His prayers in the garden, "Who in the days of His flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death." 3. Again, Hannah's prayer was secret. It was not spoken in articulate language. "Now, Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." 4. Hannah fully looked for and expected a result from her prayer. I gather this from the fact of her making a vow. When you are vexed, anxious, thwarted, troubled about anything, try to tell the story in the simplest words to God, asking deliverance from the trouble, if it be His good pleasure to grant it; if not, asking patience under it, and to be kept from going wrong, and acting in any way contrary to His will. Seek to be perfectly open, and to tell everything that is upon your mind,—your temptations, the difficulties you find in keeping your temper and conduct right, and what your special wishes are under the circumstances. Our Heavenly Father, our Divine Friend, is pleased and honoured by the confidence we repose in Him. He would have our prayer to be not only an act of homage, but an act of confidence; not only an abasement of the heart before His majesty, but a pouring forth of the heart before

His fatherly goodness. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Prayer at the point of agony*:—Understand what prayer is; prayer is the utterance of agony. There is a flippant way of praying, which means nothing, which God never hears. We cannot always pray at the point of agony. There are indeed some whole days upon which I cannot pray at all. I can say my prayers, I can put myself into a certain reverent attitude; but all power of prayer has gone away from me; and then upon other days I could pray from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and have conscious influence with God. Hast thou ever an hour in thy poor, blank, barren life, when thou seemest to have influence in heaven? Employ every golden moment of that hour, and in the strength of God's answer thou shalt go many days. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *God sought in trouble*:—You know, when you have been walking out with your father or mother, if you come to a pretty meadow, you can leave their side, run about, pick flowers, and hardly care whether your father and mother are near you or not. But if you should run a thorn into your finger, or hurt yourself in any way, how eagerly would you run to tell them all your trouble, and to seek their help! Now God has just such children: when all is smooth and easy around them, they care not much for their Father's company; but let pain or trouble come, they are glad to run to him, and to pour out their hearts before him. It had not been for Hannah's trouble, Hannah would never have known so much of prayer and praise. (*Helena Plumptre.*)

Ver. 11. And she vowed a vow.—*About setting our hearts upon things*:—And Hannah,—what shall we say of her passionate longing and prayer for a child? Was this sinful, like the longing of the Israelites for gross and stimulating food? or was it foolish, and wanting in judgment, like good King Hezekiah's prayer for a longer life? There are traces in the story of its having been neither the one nor the other. In the first place, the granting of her request turned out thoroughly well; it turned out not only for her own happiness and honour, but for the good of the Church and people of God, which does not look as if God was displeased with it. Then look at the mind of the woman herself—what a holy and good woman she seems to have been. Then observe, too, how little of herself there is in her petition, as it is expressed in her vow. She vows that she will give the child unto the Lord "all the days of his life." Her child, as being a Levite, would, in the ordinary course of things, be bound to the service of the tabernacle from the age of twenty to the age of fifty; but Hannah vows that she will give him up to the service of the Lord from his earliest childhood. And so she did. It was clear that she had great, disinterested, patriotic views for the child, altogether distinct from any consideration of her own comfort in him; and probably in making her vow she must have been guided by some intimation from the Holy Spirit that a great honour was in store for her, but that she must seek it in the appointed way in which all blessings are to be had—in prayer and sacrifice of the mere natural inclinations. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Ver. 13. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart.—*Hannah as a worshipper*:—The strength of Hannah's moral character is manifested in her temple service. She possessed a force of soul which lifted her above trouble. Many in her circumstances would have hid the tears of their graceful nature in attic solitude; but Hannah goes to the temple to supplicate the aid of Heaven, and where so likely to be obtained as at its Shiloh Porch? 1. Hannah was a tearful worshipper. "Wept sore" (ver. 10). The worshippers of modern days scorn the idea of weeping in the sanctuary; they call it "sentimentalism," an "immoderate display of feeling," which should be concealed from public gaze. 2. Hannah was a soulful worshipper (ver. 11). Trouble had intensified her feelings, and rendered her capable of more fervent volition. Her prayer was a vow which bound to duty and to God. Her soul was in its deepest action, stretching out its hand for blessing. 3. Hannah was a silent worshipper. "Spake in her heart" (ver. 13). Her prayer was so pungent that it savoured more of emotion than voice. Yes! inside the temple at Shiloh there was a smaller sanctuary, whose floor echoed not to the unhallowed footsteps of Eli's wicked sons—that temple was Hannah's heart; Christ was its Ruler Priest. 4. Hannah was a constant, an observed, and a slandered worshipper (ver. 12—14).

We should be careful in censuring the devotions of others. People are too ready with "enthusiast," or "zealot." 5. Hannah was a successful worshipper (ver. 17-18). Upon the next festival Hannah remained from the temple on account of domestic duties (ver. 22). Women were not obligated to attend any of these feasts, and that Hannah went with her husband before shows their earnest piety. Never remain from the temple unless, like this good mother, duty demands you to. In this chapter we find home life and temple worship in very intimate association. The one greatly influences the other. When the homes of the world are one with the temple in the nature of its sacrifices, and the purity of its life, the great object of redemption will have been accomplished. At length Samuel is born, and Hannah performs her vow (ver. 24). And all who come to the Christian temple must come through sacrifice, through the death of Christ. The mother felt that her all was due to God for the child. Vows made in sorrow must not be forgotten in song. What a motto for mothers, "I have lent him to the Lord." God pays good interest for the loan of young children. Hannah made a good investment both for herself and her son—to-day she is known not as the wife of Elkanah, but as the mother of Samuel. Why? Because she lent him to the Lord. Lessons: 1. Never deride personal affliction. It is from the Lord (ver. 5). 2. Families living at Rama should remember the temple at Shiloh. 3. Children taken to the temple in youth are likely to turn out prophets, as Samuel did. 4. The discord of home may be hushed by a visit to the temple. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)—*Prayer in the heart*:—The sufferings of Elizabeth Fry as she drew near her end were sometimes very great, and once she said that if it was to last no one could wish for her life. In her worse pain, however, her faith and hope burned clearly. "Prayer is always in my heart, if I may say so, it is my life," was among her sayings. (*The Quiver*.)

Vers. 13—17. **Therefore Eli thought she was drunken.**—*Of the sinfulness of rash judgments*:—This was not the first time, nor will it be the last, that God's true servants have been mocked and falsely accused for actions which have been really pious and devout. They are "a peculiar people"—peculiar, that is, to the world, who cannot understand their ways. If you resolve to be a Christian, indeed, you must be prepared to be misunderstood, and to have things said about you which are not true. Eli's judgment of Hannah was a rash one. He should not have censured her for intemperance, without much better grounds to go upon. And the fault was all the worse in him, because he was high priest; and, as God's minister, he ought, even supposing her to have gone astray, to have shown some pity and gentleness in reproving her. If Eli had judged himself and his own house, seriously taking himself to task for his weak partiality to his sons, and giving them such a rebuff for their vileness as should have restrained them, he would not have been judged by God. The sin of rash judgment and censoriousness is a very serious one, however lightly we may be disposed to think of it. This is evident both from reason and from the Bible. As we have plenty of faults to find at home, it must be the height of presumption to go out of ourselves, and to pass judgment upon our neighbour.—Then, again, we have not the material for judging our neighbour fairly. His conduct, indeed, is under our eyes; but how can we know what have been his motives and intentions? Lastly, judgment, like vengeance, belongs to God, and to God only. Having committed himself to a false accusation, Eli did the best thing he could to repair it. (*Dean Goulburn*.) *On judging others*:—The ordinary cannot judge the extraordinary. A man when he has all his senses about him, and would therefore feel himself in his most judicious mood, cannot reach certain cases—they lie mile on mile beyond him. Only grief can understand grief; only poetry can understand poetry; only love can interpret love; and only a woman in Hannah's mood can understand the trembling of Hannah's lips. We should be careful how we judge one another. Priests do not always understand people. Official persons seldom do understand extra officials. Eli had been accustomed to look upon persons, and to see them behave themselves under certain limits; he had observed them displaying certain decorums when they came into the neighbourhood of the holy place. But here is something he never saw before; and the priest of the living God, ordained and consecrated—who ought to have had a word of charity for the lowliest creature beneath his feet—instantly, with that little remnant of devil that is in the best men, says, "Thou art drunken!" Oh,

when will priests be charitable! When shall we put the better and not the worse construction on extraordinary signs and tokens! When shall we speak hopefully! "Men would be better if we better deemed them." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Hannah:—The following circumstances attending this prayer are recorded, and worthy of attention:—1. It was accompanied with a vow, expressed in language the most suitable and pious. Are we desiring anything of God? We ought to think of Him, as well as of ourselves. It is thus we pray according to His will, and then we may know that He heareth us. 2. Observe the manner of her devotion. "Now Hannah, she spake in her heart," &c. There are things which we may not be at liberty to communicate to the nearest relation, or to the dearest friend; but to God only. Hereby she testified her belief that God was omniscient. She knew that words were not necessary to inform a Being to whom all hearts are open. It is better to want language than disposition when we address Him, Who "seeketh such to worship Him as worship in spirit and in truth." It showed also, that in dealing with God, she desired the notice of none besides Him. Jehu said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." The Pharisees prayed in the corners of the streets, and to be seen of men. "But," says the Saviour, "thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet," &c. 3. Observe the misconception and censure to which it gave rise. This was the very reproach which Peter and his fellows met with on the day of Pentecost. The multitude "mocking, said, These men are full of new wine." But this reproach came from enemies. But here we find a good man, even the priest of the Most High God, issuing an equally rash censure. Some err in judging by the effects of constitutional temperament. They find a man of great vivacity, and loquaciousness, and ready to speak on all occasions, and to every one he meets, concerning his own experience and the things of God; and they set him down as a very lively Christian, and of great spirituality. They see another shrinking from observation, and seemingly afraid to open his lips, lest he should utter more than he feels; and they consider him as a lifeless soul, and under the fear of man. But if they duly reflected, and judged properly, they would ascribe much to the mercury of the one and the phlegm of the other, which affect them in all other things as well as in religion. Many are too much biased in their judgment by real faults and failings. These need not be pleaded for; but through natural infirmity there may be much irregularity, where there is also not a little share of sincerity. Especially let us guard against vilifying or censuring the devotion of others, or the mode of their worship; lest we deem as hypocrisy, or fanaticism, or superstition, what is truly conscientious and accepted of God. It is probable that Eli had seen many abuses of this kind, some even in his own family, and he may have stationed himself by a part of the temple to observe, and endeavour to repress such scandals. The guilty often occasion suspicions and reproaches with regard to the innocent. When a disease is epidemical, many are feared who are not infected. 4. Observe the manner in which Hannah received the sad and insulting rebuke. She makes no rash appeal to Heaven, such as is often the effect and proof of hardened guilt. She utters no bitter complaint against her accuser. She does not bid him to look at home, and upbraid him with the conduct of his own sons. She does not tell him how ill and unbecoming it was for one, in his place and office, to abuse a poor disconsolate woman at the footstool of divine mercy. She knew that a proper representation of her condition and conduct in respectful language would be the best argument in her favour. Eli was an imperfect character, yet there were in him traces of real excellencies, and his ingenuousness is one of them. He is open to conviction, and willing to acknowledge himself mistaken, and ready to make amends for the injury he had done her, by his blessing and his prayers. A lively writer has said, "I was mistaken" are the three hardest words to pronounce in the English language. Yet it seems but acknowledging that we are wiser than we were before to see our error, and humbler than we were before to own it. But so it is; and Goldsmith observes that Frederic the Great did himself more honour by his letter to his senate, stating that he had just lost a great battle by his own fault, than by all the victories he had won. 5. Observe her relief and satisfaction. "And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." Her satisfaction arose from two things. First, the rectifying Eli's mistake concerning her, and the blessing he had pronounced upon her; for what can be more consoling than to stand fair in the judgment of those we value? "To live in the estimation of the wise and

good," says Robinson, "is like walking in an eastern spice grove." Secondly, the confidence in God, which is derived from prayer. (IV. Jay.) *Mistaken judgment*:—Ah! how different is the eye of God and the eye of man! While Eli rebukes Hannah as a drunken woman, God is holding secret communion with her as a praying saint. I was once passing by the sea-side, where there was a great variety of beautiful and valuable stones. I understood little or nothing about them, and was for picking up those which appeared the prettiest to me. I took them to a person who understood stones; he smiled, and told me they were only fit to mend the road with; and then he showed me some which he had been cutting asunder, and which were indeed beautiful: but when I took them in my hand and examined the outside, I could not but acknowledge that they were almost the last that I should have thought of picking up. These stones then preached a useful sermon to me, and their text seemed to be this, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John vii. 24.) (Helen Plumptre.) *Christian charity in estimating others*:—"When Bernard chanced to spy a poor man meanly apparelled, he would say to himself, 'Truly, Bernard, this man hath more patience beneath his cross than thou hast;' but if he saw a rich man delicately clothed, then he would say, 'It may be that this man, under his delicate clothing, hath a better soul than thou hast under thy religious habit!'" This showed an excellent charity! Oh, that we could learn it! It is easy to think evil of all men, for there is sure to be some fault about each one which the least discerning may readily discover; but it is far more worthy of a Christian, and shows much more nobility of soul, to spy out the good in each fellow-believer. This needs a larger mind as well as a better heart, and hence it should be a point of honour to practise ourselves in it till we obtain an aptitude for it. Any simpleton might be set to sniff out offensive odours; but it would require a scientific man to bring to us all the fragrant essences and rare perfumes which lie hid in field and garden. Oh, to learn the science of Christian charity! It is an art far more to be esteemed than the most lucrative of human labours. This choice art of love is the true alchemy. Charity towards others, abundantly practised, would be the death of envy and the life of fellowship, the overthrow of self and the enthronement of grace. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 15, 16. **Hannah answered and said, No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit.**—*A woman of a sorrowful spirit*:—The special cause of Hannah's sorrow arose from the institution of polygamy, which, although it was tolerated under the old law, is always exhibited to us in practical action as a most fruitful source of sorrow and sin. The worse the woman the better she could get on with the system of many wives, but the good woman, the true woman, was sure to smart under it. But enough sources of grief remain; and there is not in any household, however joyous, the utter absence of the cross. The worldling says, "There is a skeleton in every house." I know little about such dead things, but I know that a cross of some sort or other must be borne by every child of God. The smoking furnace is part of the insignia of the heavenly family, without which a man may well question whether he stands in covenant relationship to God at all. **MUCH THAT IS PRECIOUS MAY BE CONNECTED WITH A SORROWFUL SPIRIT.** Note well the precious things which went in Hannah's case with a sorrowful spirit. She was a godly woman. As we read the chapter, we are thoroughly certified that her heart was right with God. Many of the sweetest flowers in the garden of grace grow in the shade, and flourish in the drip. True, there are children of the tropical sun, whose beauty and fragrance could only be produced by having bathed themselves in the golden flood, and these, in certain respects, must always stand in the forefront, yet are there choice flowerets to whom the unshaded sun would be death. They prefer a sheltered bank, or a ravine in the forest, under the shadow of the thick boughs, where a softened, mellowed light develops them to perfection. I am persuaded that he "who feedeth among the lilies" has rare plants in his flora, fair and fragrant, choice and comely, which are more at home in the damps of mourning than in the glaring sun of joy. I have known such, who have been a living lesson to us all, from their broken-hearted penitence, their solemn earnestness, their jealous watchfulness, their sweet humility, and their gentle love. 2. Hannah was a lovable woman. 3. In Hannah's case, too, the woman of a sorrowful spirit was a very gentle woman. 4. There was more, however, than I have shown you, for Hannah was a thoughtful woman, for her sorrow drove her

first within herself, and next into much communion with her God. That she was a highly thoughtful woman appears in everything she says. The product of her mind is evidently that which only a cultivated soul could yield. 5. Remember, also, that though she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, she was a blessed woman. It is now clear that much that is precious may go with a sorrowful spirit. MUCH THAT IS PRECIOUS MAY COME OUT OF A SORROWFUL SPIRIT: it is not only to be found with it, but may even grow out of it. 1. Observe, first, that through her sorrowful spirit Hannah had learned to pray. In too many cases ease and health bring a chill over supplication, and there is a needs be for a stirring of the fire with the rough iron of trial. Many a flower reserves its odour till the rough wind waves it to and fro, and shakes out its fragrance. As a rule the tried man is the praying man; the angel must wrestle with us in the night before we learn to hold him, and cry, "I will not let thee go." 2. In the next place, Hannah had learned self-denial. This is clear, since the very prayer by which she hoped to escape out of her great grief was a self-denying one. She desired a son, that her reproach might be removed; but if her eyes might be blessed with such a sight she would cheerfully resign her darling to be the Lord's as long as he lived. 3. Another precious thing had come to this woman, and that was, she had learned faith. 4. Still more of preciousness this woman of a sorrowful spirit found growing out of her sorrow: she had evidently learned much of God. Driven from common family joys she had been drawn near to God, and in that heavenly fellowship she had remained a humble waiter and watcher. In seasons of sacred nearness to the Lord she had made many heavenly discoveries of his name and nature, as her song makes us perceive. (1) She now knew that the heart's truest joy is not in children, nor even in mercies given in answer to prayer, for she began to sing, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord"—not "in Samuel," but in Jehovah her chief delight was found. "Mine horn is exalted in the Lord." (2) Next, she had also discovered the Lord's glorious holiness, for she sang, "There is none holy as the Lord." (3) She had perceived His all-sufficiency; "There is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God." (4) She had found out God's method in providence, for how sweetly she sings, "The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength." (5) She had also been taught the way and method of his grace as well as of his providence, for never did a woman show more acquaintance with the wonders of divine grace than she did when she sang, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (6) She had also seen the Lord's faithfulness to his people. (7) She had foreseen, also, somewhat of His kingdom, and of the glory of it. Her prophetic eye, made brighter and clearer by her holy tears, enabled her to look into the future, and looking, her joyful heart made her sing, "He shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his Anointed." MUCH THAT IS PRECIOUS WILL YET BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO ARE TRULY THE LORD'S, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE A SORROWFUL SPIRIT. 1. Hannah had her prayers answered. 2. Not only did there come to Hannah after her sorrow an answered prayer, but grace to use that answer. 3. Hannah had acquired another blessing, and that was the power to magnify the Lord. 4. Moreover, her sorrow prepared her to receive further blessings, for after the birth of Samuel she had three more sons and two daughters, God thus giving her five for the one that she had dedicated to him. This was grand interest for her loan: five hundred per cent. Last of all, it was by suffering in patience that she became so brave a witness for the Lord, and could so sweetly sing, "There is none holy as the Lord, neither is there any rock like our God." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Hannah's gracious disposition*:—Hannah still found prayer and patience the best anodines and antidotes for assuaging her grief; cold patience must quench her corival's fiery contumely, and hot fervent prayer must quicken and prevail with God to grant her desire; and to animate her devotion the more she adds warm tears thereunto, and, as if all this were not enough, she subjoins likewise her solemn vow to God, saying, If thou wilt give thine hand-maid a man child, then will I give him to the Lord all the days of his life. The judge misjudged, and misconstrued her true devotion, as was that of those Primitive Christians (Acts ii. 18). Thus also both ancient and modern martyrs have been misjudged in all ages, and if we be so in our age, God is not leading us through any untrodden paths; many better than we have gone before us in that way, but our comfort

is the day of judgment will judge over again all that are misjudged. (Psalm xxxvii, 6). Hannah is silent, touching the taunts of Peninnah, that was so peevish to her; and though she could not be so to Eli's taunts here, but answers them, yet she setteth not up a loud note at him, calling him a false accuser; nor doth she twit him in the teeth, with bidding him to look better to those drunken whoremasters, his own sons, saying vice corrects sin, as many pert dames would have done in her circumstances; but she gives him a milder answer to his reproaches than the blessed Apostle could scarcely give to the High Priest in his day (Acts xxiii, 5) calling him a whited wall, &c., but she here gives the high priest good words, patiently bearing his unjust censurings of her. 3. Here is her prudence, as well as patience, she seeketh to satisfy him against his false judgment. Saith she, I am a woman, in whom drunkenness is more abominable than in men; and thereupon the Romans punished it with death, as well as adultery, and that she was a woman of a troubled spirit, so more likely to be drunk with her own tears (whereof, good soul, she had drunk abundance) rather than with any intoxicating liquors. 4. Behold here, her humility and modesty together with her patience and prudence, none of which could have shined so forth in her, had she been really drunk according to Eli's over-severe sentence; notwithstanding Eli's rash severity in so misjudging her, yet she useth no railing accusation against him, as is said of Michael against the Devil (Jude, ver. 9.) in calling him an unjust judge. (C. Ness.)

Ver. 17. Thy petition that thou hast asked of him.—*Specific objects in prayer*:—To make prayer of any value there should be definite objects for which to plead. We often ramble in our prayers, we chatter about many subjects, but the soul does not concentrate itself upon any object. Imagine an archer shooting with his bow and not knowing where the mark is! Would he be likely to have success? Conceive a ship, on a voyage of discovery, putting to sea without the captain having any idea of what he was looking for! Would you expect that he would come back laden either with the discoveries of science or with treasures of gold? In everything else you have a plan. You do not go to work without knowing that there is something that you designed to make. How is it that you go to God without knowing what blessing you designed to have? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 19. And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord.—*Early morning prayer*:—The fragrance of the morning prayer lingers with us throughout the day. A man cannot free himself from the farewell kiss of his wife and little one throughout his day of toil. They urge him to his best endeavour. In the moment of peril they haunt him like a guardian angel. In like manner the fragrant protection of God's morning kiss upon the soul lingers with and fortifies it for its duties, be they never so varied and exacting. His blessing rests upon us from our morning prayer, and quickens our homeward footsteps when the day is done, for we hunger for His more immediate presence again.

Ver. 23. And Elkanah her husband said unto her.—*The father must take his part in the spiritual culture of children*:—It is a poor manhood and a dishonourable, neglectful fatherhood that leaves all the religious life and devotion of children to the mother or to others, and it must be disreputable before the Lord. Nor is the blameworthiness avoided by the habit of urging the claims of the busy life of our days. If any father thinks that saving a little more money for the children, or in order to give them better social position and appearance, is of greater importance than his own careful nurture of them in the love of Christ and in consecration to the Lord, then to God he will have to answer for the folly of his judgment and the evil of his practice and neglect. If the father does not hope in God for the children, as well as the mother tend them for the Lord, life must have sorrowful mistakes, if not miserable wrecks. The mother at home watches over the child for the Lord's sake in many homes, and what does the father do? Is it only careless, irreverent agreement that he gives to the life-plans of the mother for the souls of the sons and daughters; or, recognising in the mother's love and devotion the will of God, does he at least lift up all his heart in prayer to God that the Lord would establish His word of promise by accepting, for all time and eternity, the little ones whom He has given? We—

men and fathers—have our part in the consecration of the children as well as the mothers who watch them through the perils of their infancy; and if our hands do not touch the children so often as do the mother's, in watchfulness and guidance, yet should our hearts the more wait on God in longing for the establishment of His word of hope. No father can without sin delegate all the spiritual nurture of his children to their mother; still less can he, without guilt, hand it over to a stranger in school or church. (*G. B. Ryley.*) *Early training of children*:—He would be a foolish gardener who never pruned or nailed up a delicate fruit-tree till the branches carried their young leaves and open blossoms. No! train and guide for the coming blossoming time; and when it comes the sweet growth of hearts accepted in the Beloved and in the covenant will be provided by the Spirit of life. Thus Hannah trained her little Samuel to recognise himself as dedicated to the Lord; and, as we shall soon see, she had not long to wait for the child's ratification of her vow. (*G. B. Ryley.*)

Vers. 24—28. **And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks.**—*The duty of presenting children to God in the way of religious education*:—There is nothing more characteristic of Christianity than the tenderness and sympathy which it inspires. The Bible delights in domestic scenes; and it presents to us the pious mother in her anxieties, in her prayers, in her vows, and then in the dedication of the child obtained by prayer to the Lord her God. I. The first question we purpose to consider is, **AT WHAT AGE DO WE PROPOSE TO COMMENCE THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN?** And I answer, at the age at which Samuel was brought by Hannah to the Lord; "when she had weaned him"—when "the child was young." Now, the reason why we begin with children so early, even under the age of seven years, is important. The reason, therefore, why we begin so early is, because their depravity begins to manifest itself so early: the disorder begins early, and we must begin early to apply the remedy. 2. And, also, because habits are early formed. 3. Because, also, in early age they are most susceptible. 4. Also, because in this age juvenile depravity abounds. 5. But it may be asked, not only at what age do we begin, and why do we begin so early; but, how do we apply ourselves to the work? I answer, we seize on the natural vivacity and buoyancy of children, and aim to improve it to good purposes. II. **THE OBJECT WE HAVE ULTIMATELY IN VIEW.** And that is, their dedication to God; we lend them to the Lord, that, as long as they live, they may be His. 1. Instruction in the elements of the Christian religion. The first thing that Eli would probably do with the young Samuel, would be to instruct him in the history of the Old Testament. 2. But there would be a danger, even in religious instruction, if the children were not early taught to deny themselves; if they were not duly disciplined, and made to practise self-government. 3. But beside this, due regard must be paid to the great sacrifice of the Christian system. I gather this from the first verse of the text. When Hannah took the young child to the house of God, she took with her "three bullocks." 4. There is the hope that these children will be brought to dedicate themselves to God all the days of their lives. "As long as he liveth, he shall be lent unto the Lord." 5. And then, all this must be accompanied by fervent prayer. III. **THE MOTIVES WE HAVE TO ENCOURAGE US.** The first is gratitude, looking back to the past; the next is hope, looking forward to the future. (*D. Wilson.*) **And the child was young.**—*Of infant baptism and of childlike children*:—In the Hebrew of this passage, the word translated "young" is the same as that translated "child," so that the literal rendering of the words is, "and the child was a child." This may have two meanings, both of which are very instructive. The first meaning is that the child was young in age, when he was dedicated to the Lord by his parents. Very likely the words before us, "the child was young," are put in as a sort of explanation, as much as to say: "He was entirely dependent upon his mother and father; so young that he could not have gone up to Shiloh by himself; if he could walk a little, it was all he could do; he could not have brought himself to Eli, or into the house of the Lord." But the words, "and the child was young," may bear another and perhaps a more satisfactory meaning. It would be high praise if it were said of a man, "and the man was a man"; we should understand by it that he was brave, outspoken, fearless, upright, possessed of all manly virtues. And when it is said, "the child was a child," perhaps we are to understand that the little Samuel had all childlike

graces, was gentle, teachable, humble, submissive to his parents, and those set over him. And this may lead us to think how the young people of our own days have too often none of those graces, which should distinguish young people; the children are too often children no more—in forwardness, in conceit, in insubordination, in want of respect for parents and elders, they are like persons three or four times as old as themselves: a very bad sign of the times, and only matching too well with others which we see around us. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Vers. 27, 28. **For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition.**—*Parentage and piety*:—"The Hand of God in History" might be the appropriate title of many of the books of Scripture, for the sacred records largely illustrate the agency of God in the affairs of men. As an engineer adjusts all the parts of his machine to accomplish one result, and by a touch of his hand can direct their motion; so has God arranged the events of time, harmonised their diversities, and gathered into unity their manifold influences. Great events have often been originated by most trivial causes, and great men have been developed in most unlikely ways. The stain left on paper by the bark in which Lawrence Foster had rudely cut his name, led to the invention of printing—a power of mightiest influence on the world. The fall of an apple in the garden of Sir Isaac Newton suggested to that great philosopher the law of gravitation, till then unknown, but which is now recognised as the security of creation. To the Ishmaelite merchants, and to the captain of Pharaoh's guard, it was an ordinary affair of commerce to buy or sell a slave, yet from the Hebrew boy, the subject of their traffic, what marvellous events transpired, of vast importance to the temporal welfare of a nation, and to the Church, in whose memory Joseph is for ever embalmed! That child, at the mercy of the Nile and its crocodiles, found so timeously by Pharaoh's daughter, was to attain a greater eminence than the king who fostered him, and to become the first historian and lawgiver of the world. In Israel of old it would excite no wonder that a wedded wife longed to be a mother; for, by the promise of Jehovah, the woman's seed was to be the great Deliverer. Nor would it seem unbecoming that a godly wife should cry to God for offspring; yet that simple Hannah on her knees became the link of a chain in the revival of piety and patriotism in the Promised Land. Though by no means without light, the Church of Israel had been favoured with no direct prophecy since the death of Joshua. Religion during the long interval had its ebbs and flowings—less and less marked, and had evidently declined. There was a lack of patriotism in the decline of piety; for among the Hebrews, religious and patriotic sentiments were essentially conjoined, and mutually stimulative. The ritual of the chosen people had become formal, and their worship often idolatrous. True worshippers were isolated during this dark age of the Church of Israel. Though they kept the candle of the Lord from going out, they did not arrest the national degeneracy. To keep religion lively, it is not enough for individual souls to wait upon the Lord. Activity is one of the most salutary means of spiritual health. Unless we become the means of reviving others, they will deaden us. Like bodies in nature, where the heat of one either warms the other or is cooler by the contact, so a living piety raises the standard of others, and a languid devotion is lowered to the level of the contiguous death. The true worshipper was not called upon to absent himself, or separate, though ministers of the sanctuary were unworthy. The priesthood then was by descent of blood, not by piety. In the New Testament dispensation it is otherwise. There has been occasional necessity for protesting and seceding from the professing Church. When Christianity was established, the Church seceded from the Jewish Temple; when it was reformed, it was by a protest against the errors of the Papacy; and when it has been purified still further, there have been secessions from Establishments for conscience sake. But Elkanah was obedient to the divine call when he went to Shiloh. He honoured the ordinances that were appointed by God, and waited at the place where Jehovah had put his name, and where he met his people. Let us now turn to Samuel's mother. Hannah was a pious and prayerful woman. Year after year, at the solemn feasts, did Peninnah reproach the sensitive Hannah. With intense earnestness of soul did she cry to God and wrestle at the throne of grace, though not a word escaped her lips. Hannah went home without her sadness, and buoyant with the expectation of answered prayer. Faith triumphed over nature, and in this earnest realised the blessing. Nor was her faith misplaced or unrewarded. She saw the Divine gift in the child

of her affection, and received a lesson of gratitude and dependence in his every smile and tear. Hannah's piety did not cool when her wish was gratified. She regarded her child as a sacred deposit to be returned to God. She had asked him from Heaven; and, ere he saw the light, she had written many prayers on his behalf in the book of God's remembrance. 1. This family scene speaks to all Christian parents. In the diary of a mother who lived in a secluded spot of Long Island, America, was inscribed this record some forty years ago: "This morning I rose very early to pray for my children, and especially that my sons may be ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ." Her life corresponded with her piety, and her influence upon her children was blessed. Her prayers on their behalf were abundantly answered. Her eight children were all trained up for God. Her five sons became ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ. The others are well known in the American Church. The Rev. Henry Ward Beecher is another of these fruits of a mother's prayers. Begin the dedication and Christian training of your children early, and continue them with earnest prayer, confiding faith, and hopeful perseverance. "Hold the little hands in prayer, teach the weak knees their kneeling. Let him see thee speaking to thy God; he will not forget it afterward. When old and grey he will feelingly remember a mother's tender piety; and the touching recollection of her prayers shall arrest the strong man in his sin." Train their imitative powers—so strong in childhood—to copy a good example seen in your own daily life. Watch the first growth of grace with eagerness as intense as the first step, or the earliest articulation of a father or a mother's name. 2. This family scene speaks to sons and daughters. It shows the blessed estate of children who have been dedicated to the Lord by parental prayer, and whose careful training has been the improvement of that privilege. Such is the testimony of an American statesman, who was exposed to much spiritual danger at the period of the French Revolution in the eighteenth century when a strong tide of unbelief rolled over the civilised world: "I believe I should have been swept away by the flood of French infidelity if it had not been for one thing—the remembrance of the time when my sainted mother used to make me kneel by her side, taking my little hands in hers, and cause me to repeat the Lord's Prayer." Nor is the case of John Randolph a solitary example. It is the blessing promised to all praying and believing mothers. 3. This family scene speaks to those who remember with bitterness their neglect of youthful opportunities, and their sad misimprovement of a mother's fondest wishes, and a father's solid counsels. (*R. Steele.*) *Asked and heard of the Lord*:—Nor are we to marvel that the Book of God should concern itself here and elsewhere with matters that are sometimes the occasion of silly smiles in the unreverent, or meet only with profane disregard in the shallow. Rather, let us in our hearts and homes thank God for a Book that, coming from Him, so hallows our human affections, deals so reverently and tenderly with a woman's disappointments and a man's affection, and also with his pity for her sadness, as that it opens the history of the first, and in some things the greatest of the prophetic order, with the story of Hannah's grief and Elkanah's effort at consolation. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ does not laugh any human hope or grief to scorn. Now, this earnestness, this very agony of deep desire in Hannah, is an instance of God's forerunning grace; the grace that blesses us even before we see the light of this world; that blesses us in our ancestry, in our homes and kindred, in our father and mother—the grace that sanctifies us by a mother's piety, and by the prayers offered to God before she knows a mother's joy. God's best men and women have been from mothers' prayers and vows, and from fathers' solemn consecration. Blessed unspeakably is, or ought to be, that life of man or woman, boy or girl, that has been heralded into the world not only by pain, but also by prayer, and its advent into these "lower parts of the earth" prefaced by the hand of father or mother laying hold upon God. God's forerunning, preparing grace is not the cold supervision of an Almighty One who deals with human tears or joys only as incidents in the outworking of His inscrutable will; but it is the loving, gentle touch of a Father who takes a woman's tearful longings, or a man's joys and hopes; and by the longing and the hope, by the tears and joys of father and mother, prepares greatly consecrated men and saintly women of God. So was it with Samuel the asked and heard of God. Thus was it with Jeremiah and Timothy and Augustine, and that other early teacher of the Church of whom it is told that often, when he slept the sleep of babyhood, his devoted father would bend over him and reverently kiss the little breast that by consecration of

father and mother had become the temple of the Holy Ghost. In her grief she was as reproach to the feast of tabernacles, at which all were to be happy. Her grief was no nobler than ours is oftentimes, but just as human; and like ours, too, in this—that a strain of fretfulness ran through it. Yet there is in Hannah's grief one feature that more than redeems it from commonness. After years of repining she has at last dared to share her trouble with the God of Israel, and pour it forth as into the bosom of the Lord of Hosts. That is now a blessedness in her bitterness. She has, at length, gone where alone it is well to weep, grieve, regret, or be bitter; to the mercy-seat. For it is safe and blessed to pour out life's bitterness only where you can pray: and that is not to the sympathy of men and women, but to the heart of God, at the feet of Jesus, before the Ark of the Covenant. There we may weep, grieve, mourn, and pray about anything. What do we pray for? Is it possession or consecration? Is it selfishly to hold earth's blessings and heaven's gifts on earth, and with them minister as much as we can to our own satisfaction and delight, or, behind and deeper than our own longings and cravings for self, have we a wish to truly serve the Lord with His own blessings, and "gladly give up all to Him to whom our more than all is due?" Oh! pray not for mere possession; pray that the more you have of anything, the more you may be able to consecrate to God; and pray, too, that you may not have anything without devotion of it to God. If you long for life here, and there is no reason why you should not, let it be that you may the longer live to Christ's praise. If you ask for this world's good, let it be that you may devote the more to Jesus. If you long for the love and light of this world, for the home lights that may be denied you, for the lamps of love to shine about you that have never yet been kindled for you, let it be that with fuller heart and wider reach of affection you may the more reveal and illustrate the love that passeth knowledge. If you seek for pardon, let it be under the quick impulse of love to Christ, and in order to glorify His cross. The high priest's words might have fallen on this distressed soul like a blast of frosty winter over the blossoms of the early spring time. How often tender hearts run risk from the ignorant hardness of others; who, perhaps, mean well enough, but are regardless of "wringing or breaking a heart." Nay, the more tender the heart's experience is, the more it hazards from intercourse with men at such times. God alone, Christ alone can be trusted for the right understanding, the gentle treatment of our griefs and wants and prayers. Many a time—God grant unwittingly—they wound where the Lord would heal, or heal but slightly when the Lord would wholly save. We are not fit to take care of one another; "who is sufficient for these things?" I have known of souls alienated from life and full consecration by the ill-judged or lightly-weighted utterance of a minister of Christ, who has thought as wisely when he has spoken to a heart's experience as Eli did when he looked at Hannah, and told her to cease from her drunkenness. She had prayed, therefore she might go in peace. She had poured out her heart to the Lord, why should she, then, be sad any more? She had made her cares the Lord's, she had cast her burden upon the Lord, and might now be at rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Nor should we ever be other than calm after prayer, even though the answer be for a while ungranted. An ungranted petition is no warrant for not abiding calmly after we have tried to make our cares God's; for either He will, at the best time, give us what we ask, or at the proper time give us something better than our prayers. Thus it came about that Samuel was "asked of the Lord," as in later days he was known as the "heard of the Lord." (G. B. Ryley.) *A prayer and its issue*:—1. It was heart-prayer. 2. It was based on a new name for God. She appealed to Jehovah under a new title, "Jehovah of Hosts," as though it were nothing to Him to summon into existence an infant spirit, whom she might call child. 3. It was definite prayer. "Give unto thine handmaid a man-child." "For this child I prayed." So many of our prayers miscarry because they are aimed at no special goal. 4. It was prayer without reserve. "I have poured out my soul before the Lord." 5. It was persevering prayer. "It came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord." 6. It was prayer that received its coveted boon. 7. The workings of sorrow. In this prayer we can trace the harvest sown in years of suffering. Only one who had greatly suffered could have poured out such a prayer. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *Prayer answered*:—Hannah emptied her heart of its sorrows, and had it filled with peace. She could eat her meat with a merry heart, and was no more sad. Nor did she forget praise after prayer. She rose up in

the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord. Little grace can pray; but only great grace can praise. Any child can ask for what it wants, or cry out when he is in pain; but it is not every child that has a heart to be grateful for kindness received; or that will even be at the pains to say, Thank you for it, though told day after day that he ought. Children of God! do you not plead guilty here? Where is the same earnestness in praising that there was in praying? When have you been so thankful for the mercy received, as you thought, when you were begging for it, you would be, if you might but have it? Oh that our hearts may be better tuned for that happy place where every breath is praise! The prayers of Hannah were nigh unto the Lord continually: he remembered her, and gave her a son; and that she might never forget how she had obtained him, she called him Samuel, that is, Asked of God; so that every time she heard or uttered the name of the dear child, she might remember her prayer-answering God, and be stirred up to renewed praise. What is this grateful woman preparing as an offering for her God? No less than the much loved child she has received from him! "Hannah said, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and there abide for ever." And is this the way, Hannah, in which you mean to enjoy the much longed for treasure? O woman, great is thy faith! great is thy wisdom! Yes, it is just in proportion as we render back unto the Lord that which he hath given us, and place it at his disposal, and under his care, that we enjoy it. You know when any one wants to make the most of his money, he puts it into the bank. Now, if you want to make the most of a mercy or a comfort, place it in the Lord's hands, and be well assured that you shall receive your own with usury. Earthly banks may fail and disappoint, but you will never meet with one who has been a loser by putting into the Lord's bank. I mean by devoting any thing to Him, as Hannah devoted her darling child. He promises you a hundred fold even in this present life, and you know he is always as good as his word. And now, while Hannah was weaning her infant, she had the yet more difficult task of weaning her own heart: you may be sure that every day tended to endear him more to her; and you will expect that her resolution at last failed her; but Hannah knew where her great strength lay, and she found the truth of her own sweet song, "He will keep the feet of His saints." As soon as ever she had weaned the child, she set out on her first and last journey with him, taking offerings and sacrifices for the temple service, and especially, the calves of the lips, even praise unto her God. "He worshipped the Lord there." How very beautiful is this acknowledgment to the praise of a prayer-answering God! Ah! how many an answer is unheeded by us when we ought to be inscribing upon it in letters of glowing gratitude, "For this mercy I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him." Nay, my children, were our eyes properly opened to discern between good and evil, we might inscribe on many a thing with which we are inclined to quarrel, "For this I prayed." (*Helen Plumtre.*) *The duty of intercessory prayer*:—1. Intercessory prayer for your children is necessary, as an evidence of the earnestness of feeling and purpose with which you have entered upon your office. 2. Earnest intercessory prayer will eminently contribute to prepare and qualify the mind for more effectually dealing with the children. Successful teaching, in so far at least as the cultivation of the religious element of character is concerned, depends, I am convinced, much more upon moral than intellectual qualifications. 3. Prayer for the children will infuse strength, promptitude, and energy to your mind, amid the manifold difficulties and discouragements of your office. 4. And, lastly, earnest intercessory prayer will bring the blessing of God down upon your children. (*H. Richard.*) *Spiritual transmutations*:—What a succession of transmutations these verses present! The bitterness of a woman's grief is transmuted into earnest, believing, importunate prayer; this prayer returns to her in a precious gift; this gift, so earnestly sought, causes in its receiver a deep sense of gratitude; this gratitude leads to the willing consecration of the divine gift to its Giver; this sacrifice of Hannah's darling son is transformed into an unspeakable national blessing. Out of a woman's sorrow comes a nation's reformation and salvation. All the great works of God for man begin in man; in some one heart which He visits with trials and comforts, with conflicts and victories. And He will use the commonest means along with the most sacred to bring to

pass His purpose. Hannah was in that state of mind which turns everything into fuel to feed its own consuming passion. That there may have been something of self-will, perhaps of discontent and envy, in her feelings, we may not be able to deny. For, in point of fact, you never, or very rarely, do obtain from our poor humanity a desire which is absolutely pure, without mixture of selfishness of some sort. And God, who is rich in mercy, forgives the sin, and accepts the desire as the germ of a higher life. If the strength of holy desire disturbs sin, and sin defiles the stream of our prayers and services, yet it is only by the continual flow of our better feelings that we attain to a greater purity; the stream cleanses itself by movement, whereas stagnation is increase of pollution. Hannah, then, was discontented with life as it was, how far with a holy, how far with an unholy, discontent we cannot say. She was burdened and miserable. And in such a state of mind she might have become chronically depressed, dissatisfied, wretched. She might have turned from God, and shut herself in upon herself. She might have allowed her grief to corrode her heart, and poison all her life. Instead of this, it was transmuted into prayer. Concentrated, continuous, importunate prayer, in which the suppliant was quite oblivious of all observers—such was the way in which she pleaded her case before the Lord. And, in a similar manner, God wishes us all to transmute and transform the evils and sorrows of life into prayer. The worst thing we can do is to be silent about them toward Him, though it will, perhaps, be the best to be so toward men. And, even if we are sometimes so confused that we know not how to frame a petition, then let us simply go to God, and talk to Him about it, as we might talk to our dearest friend. It will give us some measure of relief to know that it is shared by Another, and He the wisest and the best; it will bring the mind into that partial repose which comes from leaning, if only in a small degree, upon faithful love. Turn trouble, disappointment, bereavement, anxiety—aye, even sin—into prayer. These are like the dark, hard, rough ore, which is put by the smelter into the fire, and from which comes a bright stream of precious metal. Turn your sorrows into prayer, and prayer will transmute them into gold. Hannah's prayer was transmuted into a gift, the very gift she had prayed for. "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him." She might have loved the child had she not prayed so specially for him; but she loved him all the better for prayer and for the answer that he was to it. "For this child I prayed." Thus the prayers of God's people often take concrete form, and stand round about them as unmistakable evidences of His remembrance of them and interference for them. "For this home I prayed," one can say. "For this situation, this business, I prayed," another can say. "For this mission, its establishment, its maintenance, its usefulness, I prayed," a third can say. "For this poor man, for this unhappy woman, that I might get food, shelter, aid for them, I prayed," a fourth can say. "For this man's conversion I prayed," a fifth can say. Yes; God hears and answers prayer. The fervent wish sent up to Him, like Hannah's prayer, without vocal words, comes back in rich visible gifts, as the invisible vapours are drawn up by the sun, and return in fertilising showers. The transmutation was again repeated when the answer to prayer was changed into gratitude. It is possible to pray when we are in great trouble, and to be answered, and then forget God who helped us. Complaining comes easier to human nature than thanksgiving. And, unlike Miriam's song, it was not an outburst caused by excited feeling which spent itself in words, but a sign of a permanent condition of mind. The gift never became more to her than the Giver, never shut God out from her consciousness, never tempted her to act and think as if now she could do without Him. This was a distinct and great advance in her spiritual life. The sense of need was good, so was prayer for help, but the unflinching thankfulness of her heart was better still. She had come out to walk with God in the sunshine. And now we come to observe how gratitude rose to the still higher level of sacrifice. "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: Therefore, also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there." She did not forget her vow as so many do. The one and only child whom she had gained by a great wrestling, the jewel of her heart, she surrendered. Hannah is greatest and is nearest to God in sacrifice. Her

spirit is now exquisitely pure; her loyalty to God is absolute. Here is a vital difference between a soul which is truly devout and one which only calls upon God in trouble for the sake of what he can get. God so comes into the first as that the gift he seeks makes him loving, trustful, self-forgetful; he passes beyond it into a quiet acquiescence in the perfect will of the Father; he comes to God with such fulness of faith that, like Abraham, he would surrender even the coveted gift again. It is sacrifice, and yet not sacrifice; for there is no wrench of the heart, no struggle of the will. Hannah was happier after she had left her darling at Shiloh. And now, finally, let us observe how this sacrifice of her motherly heart, this voluntary and happy surrender to God of His best gift, was transformed into a national blessing. Hannah's consecrated child became the judge and saviour of his people. But how much wider was that service than ever he or his praying mother had imagined! They thought of him as a life-long attendant in the tabernacle, where he would be sheltered from the noise and battle of life; but God designed him for a man of action, for a judge and ruler of His people. You never know what honour God may put upon your sacrifice. He sees more value in it than you do. The poor widow who gave her mite, gave, all unknown to herself, a lesson in true sacrifice and in loving trust in God to all the world. When Moffat's mother entreated him to give his heart to God she never thought that God would enter that heart with such love and zeal for the salvation of the heathen, and would crown her boy with such distinguished usefulness. (*J. P. Gledstone.*) *Prayer exemplified in the case of Hannah:*—The desire of Jewish women to be the mothers of families was connected with religious feeling: children were regarded as a blessing from the Lord, and the withholding of them was considered a token of the Divine displeasure. That this was the fact, we might bring many instances from the Old Testament to prove. Rachel, on the birth of her first-born, said, "God hath taken away my reproach." Here, then, she felt her only resource was prayer; "she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." This sort of supplication never fails: "thus saith the Lord, I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears." Tears and prayers! happy is it for the mourner when these are united. Tears are barren in themselves; they express sorrow, but not humiliation—not faith. We have only to remark, further, the humility, with which she offered her most precious treasure to the Lord: she brought a large additional offering of her substance, and immediately before the presentation of her son to Eli she caused a bullock to be slain as a burnt-offering. This was the Jewish sin-offering, foreshadowing the blood of the Atonement: in her case, it clearly proved that she was deeply conscious there was nothing meritorious in her surrender of her son; that, as a sinful mother offering a sinful child, she had a favour to seek, rather than one to offer; and that she only hoped for acceptance, either for herself or her child, through the blood of the atonement.

1. With regard to THE OCCASIONS OF PRAYER. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray;" "I called upon the Lord in trouble, and the Lord heard me at large." Far be it from me to imply that the time of trouble is the only time for prayer. But, whether or not they can understand the reason of God's dealings with them, let me impress upon their minds that the time of trouble is the special time for prayer; let them, in this respect, mark Hannah's example. There is a temptation to flee from God in trouble; the disinclination to prayer is, in many cases, never greater than then; the natural inclination is to wrap up the heart in the sullenness of its own grief—to seek a morbid pleasure in excluding everything that tends to comfort. I would take this opportunity of saying a word upon a subject, perhaps too little thought of; I mean, the suitability of God's house for private prayer.

2. Let us say a word about ITS CONDITIONS. Hannah vowed a vow unto the Lord, "If Thou wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life." What we desire you to gather from this is, that we must never ask for anything which we cannot, or will not devote to the service of God. Let us examine the case of Hannah as a fair example. She wished for a son: the wish was natural; but was it safe? was she not wishing for an object of affection, that would too probably, if granted, prove an idol? We cannot deny the likelihood: see, then, how in making the request she recognised and provided against the danger; Give me a son, O Lord; and I will give him back to Thee: I dare not trust myself to ask the unqualified

gift; my present feelings tell me how dangerous it would be. Now all prayer, in order to be acceptable to God or profitable to ourselves, must be associated with this kind of condition. In asking for spiritual grace, the condition cannot be separated from the prayer; we only ask for greater ability to devote ourselves to God, and to "glorify him in our body and in our spirit which are God's."

3. And, lastly, we are taught a lesson respecting **THE ANSWER OF PRAYER**. With the answer to prayer will always come the temptation to forget the vow that accompanied it. I need not tell you that there may be a wide difference between a gift and a blessing. Children are gifts, but sometimes no blessings; look at Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli. Wealth is a gift; intellectual and physical power, friends, good health and spirits are all gifts, but very often no blessings: we cannot but desire them; we are permitted and encouraged to ask them; but, if we get them, let us remember the condition: the condition and the blessing are bound together; without the one, there is no acceptable prayer; without the other, there is no profitable answer. Every thing that relates to our happiness depends upon God's favour; unless we have this, we may have all our natural desires gratified, but leanness withal in our souls. Let us, then, seek this first, and all things else shall be added unto us. And, above all, in seasons of affliction do not let us suppose that everything depends upon a change of circumstances; do not let us resolve not to be happy, until something is given, or something is withdrawn: but let us, in humble trust, put our case in God's hands. (*T. E. Hankinson, M.A.*) **Hannah**:—The birth of a child is one of the most important events that ever takes place in our world. But for the frequency of the occurrence, it would be deemed little less than a miracle of nature and providence. The birth of an infant is a far greater event than the production of the sun. That infant is possessed of reason, conscience, and immortality. It is true these principles are not yet developed, but they are in embryo, and the oak is contained in the acorn, and the day in the dawn. There is also a relative, as well as a personal importance attached to the birth of a child; for who knows what that child may become, what good or evil he may occasion, what misery or happiness he may produce? The birth of Samuel was attended with circumstances peculiarly important and interesting. Hannah had prayed to be remembered, and "the Lord remembered her, and she conceived." And can she forget Him who has thus graciously remembered her? 1. The very name shall perpetuate the memory of the mercy. "And she called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord." Thus she could never pronounce the name without recalling the occasion. 2. She undertakes the early care of him in person. When, therefore, Elkanah and his family went up as usual to Shiloh, she determined to remain at home for this very purpose. In this state the utmost attention, and kindness, and tenderness, were her well-deserved due; and it is pleasing to see the exemplariness of her husband in his disposition and behaviour towards her. Though all the males were required to repair to Shiloh thrice in the year, the obligation did not extend to females. God requires mercy and not sacrifice, and dispenses with public institutions when we are obeying private and domestic calls. Hannah cheerfully bore the loss of Shiloh's privileges, in order to discharge a home obligation. Here, we have an opportunity to say a few words with regard to a common, and, we fear, increasing evil: I mean the abandonment of maternal nursing. Surely, nothing can be a more ungrateful return, than to treat with neglect and disdain the provision which the goodness and kindness of God have obviously made for the performance of this duty. Hannah not only nurses her own child, but dedicates him to the Lord. We see that the Lord will cause earnest persevering prayer, in due time, to yield matter for praise. We see that the answers of prayers ought to be observed and noticed. We should also remark that it is our duty, not only to observe, but to own and confess such returns of mercy, for the glory of God, and for the sake of others, that they also may be encouraged to trust and pray. (*W. Jay.*) **A praying mother**:—By the influence of her prayers, her training, her example, the Christian mother may expect to bring a blessing upon her child which shall control his life and lead to his salvation. The proof of this is to be found in the following considerations: **I. THE TIE OF NATURE MAKES THE INFLUENCE OF A PIOUS MOTHER ALMOST IRRESISTIBLE**. A mother's love is the first blessing which greets the new-born heir of immortality. Deeper and more lasting even than a father's love, the mother's yearning and compassionate

affection realises the description of the apostle. "It believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." With such a natural tie to hold her child, the pious mother wields a mighty influence. Her life, if it be well adorned with Christian graces, becomes a shining demonstration of the truth of God. Prayer from her lips is music; the Bible is her book, as well as God's. All that is winning in the promises becomes more winning as she utters them. This is his influence and power. Many a pious mother does not realise it. On such a basis of deep natural affection does the mother's nurture stand. The child is plastic to her touch. His heart is in her hand if she is faithful to her trust. Oh, what encouragement is this for her to train her children in the nurture of the Lord! II. BUT WE SHOULD FURTHER NOTICE THAT THE AFFECTION OF A MOTHER FOR HER CHILD MAKES HER PRAYERS IN HIS BEHALF ESPECIALLY EFFECTUAL. What depths of meaning, what revelation of the earnestness of human intercession, lies in these words of Hannah, which might be the utterance of multitudes!—"For this child I prayed." Upon all other subjects prayer may be restrained when it has been long time unanswered, but for her children's sake she will stand and knock until the gate of hope and life is opened, or until she dies. III. AND THIS LEADS US TO THE POINT THAT THE EVIDENCE DERIVED FROM THE PAST EXPERIENCE OF PIOUS, PRAYING MOTHERS CONFIRMS THIS PROSPECT OF SUCCESS AS THE RESULT OF FAITHFULNESS. Take another fact. In a certain theological seminary several young men who were preparing for the Christian ministry were interested to discover what proportion of their number had praying mothers. The result of this inquiry proved that, out of one hundred and twenty present, more than one hundred had been blessed by a mother's prayers and directed by a mother's counsel to the Saviour. Such evidence might be greatly multiplied. The grace of God brings salvation as the reward of a mother's faithful labours for her children. Of what amazing importance is it that parents and all who have to do with children should realise their trust, and fulfil it in the fear of God! When the sculptor Bacon was erecting the monument to Lord Chatham in Westminster Abbey, an observer said to him, "Take care what you are doing, for you are working for eternity." In a far higher sense should it be said oftentimes to those who train the young—Take care how you act toward the children, for you work for eternity." Receive them in the name of Christ, to take them unto Him, in never-wearying prayer. (R. R. Booth, D.D.) *A praying mother*:—The most ancient and most sacred institution in the world is the family. Older than the church or the state, it is the foundation of them both. It is, to be sure, not the ideal of the home or the family; for it is under the curse and subject to the evils of polygamy. Some of the purest souls the world has ever seen have shone the brighter because they were surrounded only by vice and crime. The lily, lifting up its white face to the sun upon the bosom of the lake, sends its roots down into the oozing mud, and by its own power transmutes that foulness into this fragrant beauty. So Manoah's wife, and Ruth and Hannah, shine like pearls upon the surface of the cruelty and crime of the darkest period of the Old Testament story. I. THE PRAYING MOTHER AT HOME:—The husband goes up to the Tabernacle at Shiloh. The wife stays at home with the baby. This was a division of duty recognised by the law. Let us learn a lesson of the sacredness of secular and special duties. Nay, let us rather say, of all duty; for duty is what is due from us, and He to whom it is due is God. The home is as sacred as the temple if it be recognised as the place of duty. We shall not serve God by neglecting its work or claims for what may seem to us the more spiritual service of the sanctuary. We may learn, too, that duty is not to be measured by its publicity or conspicuousness. That is most sacred and important, often, which is most alone. They were building a stone church not long ago in one of our large cities. It was a beautiful spring day, and one who was interested in its progress was surprised to find only three men at work upon it. He spoke to the foreman, with at least a suggestion of complaint in his voice, and asked how it was that there was so small a force at work on such a day. "There are twenty-five men at work upon this building, sir," was the answer, "but twenty-two of them are working in the yard. The best stones are always polished out of sight." Let not the mother, then, undervalue her throne because it is not on the highway. The father may influence society and the state directly. Let us not think the mother's influence is less because her hand is not so evidently seen upon the helm. But chiefly from this home-life of Hannah, away from the Temple and the yearly sacri-

fice, may be learned the sanctification of home duties by prayer and holy motive. It is not so much what we do, as what we do it for, on which the value of our service, and its dignity, depend. Hannah stayed at home that she might prepare a worthy offering for the Lord. To fill a new young life with noble thoughts, with lofty and unselfish aims, with a sense of the blessed fatherhood of God—this is work high enough and holy enough for any one to do. II. **THE PRAYING MOTHER AT THE TABERNACLE.** For at length the quiet, happy days at home are passed. The baby boy has come to his third year. And yet the mother's heart is glad and rejoices in the Lord—glad to make the sacrifice, which it is yet no less a sacrifice to make. A joyless sacrifice is none. That which we give to God unwillingly, and only because we must, is no gift at all. She realised the privilege of sacrifice. Let us never weigh our sacrifices lest we make more than the law demands, but rather let us bring our gifts with them. The praying mother of our story recognised God's faithfulness to His word and His answer to her prayer. She had come to Him before in sorrow as she comes now in holy joy. And she gives God the glory Who maketh poor and maketh rich, Who bringeth low and lifteth up. But all that the praying mother can do, and all the ways in which the devout father can help, will avail not at all, unless the child fulfils his part. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Prayer answered*:—We notice the fact of the answer to prayer. The answer was prompt, clear, explicit. It is an important question, Why are some prayers answered and not others? Some prayers are not answered because the spirit of them is bad. "Ye ask but receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." What is asked merely to gratify a selfish feeling is asked amiss. It is not holy prayer; it does not fit in with the sacred purposes of life; it is not asked to make us better, or enable us to serve God better, or make our life more useful to our fellows; but simply to increase our pleasure, to make our surroundings more agreeable. Some prayers are not answered because what is asked would be hurtful; the prayer is answered in spirit though denied in form. Some prayers are not answered at the time, because a discipline of patience is needed for those who offer them; they have to be taught the grace of waiting patiently for the Lord. But whatever be the reasons for the apparent silence of God, we may rest assured that hearing prayer is the law of His kingdom. Old Testament and New alike bear witness to this.. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Children and cheapness*:—Society will go to pieces if the love of children cannot be maintained. And the love of children will not be maintained if we are to prefer cheapness to the happy responsibility of rearing them. God has given us many things which were never intended "to pay," but contrariwise to tax both nerve and purse, time and patience. Among many of the things that fail to conform to commercial standards He has made lingering old age and lingering disease more than a possibility in the case of many. Now, how many families there are which cannot afford this! And if nothing is for human advantage which cannot return a two-and-a-half percentage, lingering death, among the poor, is of all things the least defensible and endurable. So thought the people of India up to a very recent date, if they do not think so now. They used to take the old people down to the Ganges, and when the tide came in, or when the alligators came up, the domestic problem of reducing expenditure was soon solved. And in Sparta, whose people attained to a civilised horror of unremunerative offspring long before our forefathers could construct a pair of shoes, the girl children were often killed as soon as they were born. Now, that was an unblushing policy; it was human life carried on upon a strictly cash basis. But Christianity is freely taught amongst ourselves, with happy results evident on every hand. The weak are cared for and cured, the old are honoured and sheltered, and children are treated as a heavy but sacred charge from the Almighty. It is a ghastly thing to see some people express pity for the loving pair who can count many curly heads on the snow-white pillows in the children's rooms. Hannah, Samuel's mother, had no such thought about children. She prayed for her child. You may hear it said, perhaps, "But all children are not Samuels;" to which it is a sufficient reply to say that, all mothers are not Hannahs. If there were more Hannahs there would be more Samuels. For children reflect the entire nature of their parents. What was it which underlay Hannah's prayer? It was a desire, the noblest which can animate a mortal, to live for another. She wanted to train a soul for God. They who watched over our bodily growth and our education were often tried in the process. They spared no time, pains, or money in their power. And despite of all that is said by spurious philanthropists, it may be safely said that our fathers were the better for

the strain to which our training subjected them. Hannah prayed that she might have such a work to fill her heart. Hannah herself had already found God, the chief gift mortals can receive, and as a gift next in value to that, she asked Him to put under her care a spirit bearing His image, that upon it, as His visible, helpless representative, she might lavish both a motherly and a religious love. And she was right. They who can ridicule such a relation as she aspired to, and afterwards filled, are to be pitied for the blindness and emptiness of their scorn. They wish to improve human life, and so they begin by trying to improve the laws of God. Thinking they can trace poverty and crime to the Christian family system, under which children are treated as a blessing, they discourage it as a bad speculation, an ill-paying concern. The Infidel Millennium is to be a millennium of small families, or none. Probably the latter would be the upshot. There would be just the same logic for that as for the other result. It is not the dear children, be they many or few, that cause vice and poverty. It is the parents, who should be dear parents, and are not. I need not remind you of the noble lives that have grown up in our country districts, and elsewhere, in homes where eight or nine hungry mouths have had to be filled out of twelve or fourteen shillings a week. Of course, if half the wages had gone in tobacco or drink, the lads and lasses would have been costly enough. It is certain that children prevent, in particular families, far more poverty than they cause. When a family has struggled through the years which precede the early youth of the children, the tide begins to turn. The regular income of the home becomes greater and more secure, in most cases, especially where parents do not mind putting their children to the noblest of all ordinary callings, some constructive trade. Hannah's philosophy transcends them all! They who live for their children, and not for cheapness, will find life both cheaper and sweeter than they who, to compass a visionary social progress, advocate the improvement of everything except personal character. The true interests of society require no unnatural and mean devices. We need not dread the growing hosts of humanity. They are not locusts—they produce more than they consume, if they live honest lives. It is a diminishing population that a virtuous nation has to fear. (*J. H. Hollowell.*)

Obtaining the greatly desired :—In the life of Nollekens, the great sculptor, the following incident occurs concerning Gainsborough, the artist. Visiting him at his studio, Nollekens found him listening to a Colonel Hamilton, who was playing superbly on the violin. "Go on, go on," cried Gainsborough, with excited enthusiasm, as the Colonel appeared to have finished. Then, in a burst of entreaty, he added, "Go on, and I will give you the picture of the boy at the style, which you have so often wished to purchase." As Hamilton continued to play the tears stood in the painter's eyes, and at the end a coach was called, in which the fortunate Colonel placed the painting he had so long coveted, and so easily acquired: and he drove away with it. Gainsborough could not resist nor refuse anything to the charm of music. What music was to the artist the true faith of a penitent and loving soul, be it reverently said, is to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to it He says: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Ver. 28. I have lent him to the Lord.—*Samuel, the Child-Christian* :—There is no child explicable apart from his parentage. The foundations of one generation are in all respects laid in the antecedent generation. In an important sense the boy begins to live when his father begins to live. The child is the parent continued down into a new generation. And so Scripture biography, much of it, begins with a statement and exposition of parentage. You remember how it was with Jesus, with John the Baptist, and now with Samuel. Science to-day lays large stress on heredity. Revelation emphasised heredity long before science was born. Francillon says that "the lives of the mothers of great men form an important branch of biographical literature." The author of the old Hebrew chapter quietly asserts the same fact by going about to narrate to us Samuel by first acquainting us with his mother. There are numerous intimations in Scripture that in the bequest of spiritual legacies the law of heritage works with peculiar constancy and vigour. "The promise is unto you and to your children." And that occurs as a frequent and favourite thought, "I will establish my covenant with Isaac for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." And this principle is wrought into the structure of the whole Jewish record. It is as though God held parent and child in one individual compact of grace, parental faith throwing itself forward upon the child, and working in and for the child

vicariously; the faith of the parent becoming in time the child's faith, just as by a physical law the features of the father and mother reappear in time in the child's face, in growing distinctness. Of Elkanah, Samuel's father, little notice is taken. A single remark of his indicates the mutual loyalty and confidences of husband and wife, and along the course of the first chapter is shown his faithful observance of religious obligations. But Samuel was pre-eminently his mother's boy, as boys are apt to be. It was his mother that prayed for him; his mother that took him to Shiloh with the bullocks, the flour, and the wine; his mother that offered him in consecration. Appreciating the quality of the parentage, then, we have laid for us a basis of just expectancy touching the quality of the offspring. We must just mention Samuel's early connection with the church and the sanctuary. I suppose that this, too, had its strengthening and educating effect. It was just in the midst of the sanctuary that the Lord's presence became manifest in him, and that the Divine voice shouted clearly and intelligibly in his ears. We may gather from the fact that there is great virtue in early and affectionate association with the church, and in earnest participation in things that concern the church. But great as is the supplementary service which the church can render the child, the home is at once his physical birth-place and his proper spiritual birth-place. It is a Spanish proverb that an ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy. The home is the first church, the hearth-stone the first altar, and the father and mother the first priests. And so the more home there is in the home, the more readily and completely does it fulfil its offices as a child-church. And the home, for the same reason, is the child's proper Sunday-school. It is not quite evident how Christian parents can ever farm out their children to the spiritual nurture of strangers. (C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.) *A mother's formative influence on the characters of her children*:—Who can hear the name of St. Augustine—that shining light, twice on the point of being extinguished, but snatched by turns from sin and heresy, to glorify the true and living God down to the latest posterity. Who can think of his name without joining with him in recognising, in his two-fold deliverance—next to the hand of God—the influence of the tender, humble, patient Monica? Theodoret, Basil the Great, Emmilia, Chrysostom, and many of those who have walked in their ways, had each their Monica; and were each proofs of the power of a mother's prayers. In later times we read of Bishop Hall, Philip Henry, and his son Matthew, Hooker, Payson, Doddridge, the Wesleys, and of many other bright stars still shining in the churches, who have had pious mothers, and who have confessed to the power of a mother's influence. John Newton learned to pray at his mother's knee; and such was the influence of her life upon his mind (and, be it remembered, that she was called to her heavenly home before her son John was eight years of age), that in after years, when at sea, and in the midst of many dangers, his agonising prayer often was, "MY MOTHER'S GOD, Thou God of Mercy, have mercy on me!" The prayer was heard, and from that time the name of "John Newton" has been a name honoured in the churches, and he will remain yet for ages as "a burning and a shining light." It was through Newton that Thomas Scott, the commentator, was led to Christ, and Wilberforce, the champion of the freedom of the slave, and the author of that "Practical View of Christianity," which brought Leigh Richmond into the ministry of Christ. And who shall now go further in attempting to estimate the probable influence of one pious mother? (*Footsteps of Truth*.) *Vows fulfilled*:—Hannah's fulfilment of her vow was to be an ample, prompt, honourable fulfilment. Many a one who makes vows or resolutions under the pressure and pinch of distress immediately begins to pare them down when the pinch is removed, like the merchant in the storm who vowed a hecatomb to Jupiter, then reduced the hecatomb to a single bullock, the bullock to a sheep, the sheep to a few dates; but even these he ate on the way to the altar, laying on it only the stones. Not one jot would Hannah abate of the full sweep and compass of her vow. (IV. G. Blaikie, D.D.) *The connection between God and children to be cultivated*:—Do not treat lightly, O parents, the connection between God and your children! Cherish the thought that they are God's gifts, God's heritage to you, committed by Him to you to bring up, but not apart from Him, not in separation from those holy influences which He alone can impart, and which He is willing to impart. What a cruel thing it is to cut this early connection between them and God, and send them drifting through the world like a ship with a forsaken rudder, that flaps

hither and thither with every current of the sea. (*Ibid.*) The *dedication of Samuel*:—In those rude times which long preceded the birth of science in our country, when there was no appliance of steam to wear vessels off the dangers of a lee-shore, nor lights shone forth on sunken reef or rocky headland to guide them through the gloom of night, one of the royal family of Scotland was in imminent hazard of shipwreck. After every effort had been made, but made in vain, to wear off shore, he vowed a vow that if God would interpose to deliver them from death, he would build and endow a chapel, as an acknowledgment of God's gracious interposition and an expression of his own gratitude. They were saved. And, though a Papist, a better man than many Protestants who forget, in the day of returned health or prosperity, the vows and resolutions formed in an hour of trouble, he fulfilled his promise. In the erection of *Maison Dieu Chapel* (in Brechin, Forfar), for so it is called, David, Earl of Huntingdon, paid his vow. Associated though it be with popish superstitions, it sprang from higher motives than either ecclesiastical pride or sectarian rivalry; and humble as these ruins are now, they form a venerable and interesting memorial of the simple faith, and devout piety, that ever and anon, like the blaze of a brilliant meteor, lighted up the long night of the dark ages of the Church. Such dedications and vows as those to which that chapel owed its existence, have fallen into too great disuse. The devout, but too much neglected, practice which these famous saints observed, Hannah also recommends to our imitation. It was in the performance of such a vow that she returned to the house of God, not empty-handed; but to earn, if I may say so, the high encomium pronounced on her of whom our Lord said, "She hath given all she had." In that child of prayer, her only son, the boy whom she leads lovingly by the hand, Hannah presented to God a gift more beautiful and costly, more precious far, than Jacob's tithe of corn and cattle, or David's richest spoils of war. A blessed contrast to another woman, the unhappy partner of Ananias' guilt and also of his doom, who, pretending, while a part was withheld, that the whole price had been given, lied to the Holy Ghost, Hannah, in going to perform her vow, like a martyr marching to the stake, "walks in her integrity." Hannah's case was peculiar. She might, repenting of her vow, have kept back not a part of the price, but the whole; nor thereby laid herself open to challenge or censure; to the taunts of Peninnah, her enemy, or of any one else. When she vowed that if God would give her a son, he should be the Lord's, Eli saw her lips move; but no more—and hearing nothing took her for a drunken woman. Only God and she herself knew what these lips had said. That was enough for Hannah. It should be so for us. "Thou God seest me," should place us in circumstances of greater restraint than broad daylight, the public street, the eyes of a theatre of spectators; even so it was a sufficient reason for Hannah performing her vow that God had heard the words of her noiseless lips, and that the vow, though a secret to others, was none to Him. It is to the honour of Hannah's sex that the only two offerings on which Jesus, He who offered himself for her and us on the cross, ever bestowed the meed of His applause, were both made by women. The one was a widow. Poor, and meanly clad, in her offering as much as in her dress, she presented a remarkable contrast to many who, sweeping into the house of God, attired in all the gaieties of changing fashions, give a wide berth to the plate at the door, or drop into the offertory, without a blush of shame, the merest, meanest pittance. Though but two mites, hers was a munificent gift, being her little all. The other woman, praised by Him whom all heaven praises, was one—strange as it will appear to such as have not reflected on the blessed truth, that a fallen is not necessarily a lost woman—from whose touch decency and decorum shrinks. As the phrase went, "she was a sinner." Lying, where all have need, and the purest love, to lie, at Jesus' feet, she washes them with a flood of tears; and, taking an alabaster box of precious ointment, pours its fragrance on the feet that for her, and us, were to be nailed on Calvary. Beside these women Hannah deserves a place. In her dedication of Samuel, in giving him up who was the light of her eyes and the joy of her home, she parted for God's sake and his service with the costliest, the most prized and precious, thing in her possession. Before turning the dedication of Samuel to a practical use, let me observe, that though we may have to wait for the reward and recompense in heaven, Hannah had not so long to wait. She says of Samuel, "I have lent him to the Lord;" and God

paid her good interest for the loan. Ages before the great words were uttered by the lips of Jesus, she proved the truth of His saying, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." "There is that scattereth," says the wise man, "and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat." Such was Hannah's experience. She gave away one child, and God paid her back with five; and promptly too. To turn the dedication of Samuel to a seasonable and important use, let me ask why so few parents now follow Hannah's example? why so few either dedicate themselves, or are dedicated by others to the Christian ministry? When other professions are overstocked, why is it that almost all the churches, both in this country and in America, are complaining of a lack of candidates for the sacred office, and especially of such as possess not only the piety, but the talents and culture which it requires? Why should not our Christian youth come forward to embrace this noblest, though meanwhile poorest, of all professions? Some years ago, leaving titles, estates, luxurious mansions, kind fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and blooming brides, many threw themselves on the shores of the Black Sea, to face frost and famine, pestilence and iron showers of death, under the walls of Sebastopol! And shall piety blush before patriotism? Shall Jesus Christ call in vain for less costly sacrifices—either of money or of men? Let those whom Providence has enriched, some with silver and some with sons, remember the touching question one wrote beneath a figure of our Lord stretched bleeding on the cross, "This Thou hast done for me, what shall I do for Thee?" (T. Guthrie, D.D.)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1--10. And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord.—Hannah's song:—Modern criticism has decided, to its own satisfaction, that the noble hymn here attributed to Hannah, cannot possibly have been uttered by her lips as a thanksgiving for the birth of Samuel. It breaks the obvious connexion of the narrative: its real theme is the rout of the nation's enemies, and the triumph of the national armies: above all, the concluding words, which speak of Jehovah's King, and pray that He may exalt the horn of His anointed, unmistakably stamp it as a product of the regal period, when the kingdom was already established. Some critics, of no mean reputation, go so far as to name David as the true author, and assign the slaughter of Goliath, and subsequent defeat of the Philistines, as the real occasion. Let us examine the hymn in detail. It is called a prayer; yet, with the exception of the concluding words, which should be rendered as a petition, it is wholly occupied with praise and thanksgiving. Prayer is not limited to supplication. It embraces all address of the human soul to the Most High: it includes all forms of worship. Praise and thanksgiving are true and necessary parts of prayer. And what are the thoughts which fill Hannah's heart, and will not be repressed? A deep and holy joy for the salvation which Jehovah has wrought for her. Her reproach of barrenness is taken away. She is now a mother in Israel: and mother of what a child! She is exultant; yet in the midst of triumph there is no vindictiveness, no uncharitable recollection of the taunts and unkindness which she had had to endure. Her heart is full, not of herself, but of God. He alone is holy: He alone is self-existent: He alone is the Rock of Israel, secure, unchanging, faithful in His covenant. From contemplating the character of Jehovah she passes to a survey of His dealings with men. In her own individual experience she sees an illustration of the laws which regulate the Divine economy. The most casual observer cannot fail to notice sudden vicissitudes of fortune in the lives of individuals and the history of nations. Whence these sharp contrasts? It is Jehovah who is "the God of life and death and all things thereto pertaining"; poverty and wealth, promotion and degradation, proceed from Him. The vicissitudes of humanity are not fortuitous; Jehovah created the world; Jehovah sustains the world; Jehovah governs the world and all that is

therein in righteousness. He defends His saints: He silences the wicked: and who can resist His will? "By strength shall no man prevail." Her prophetic vision grows clearer as she proceeds. We are now in a better position to estimate the worth of the hostile criticisms. I. Can it be seriously maintained for a moment that this hymn interrupts the narrative and is obviously out of place? What could be more natural than that Hannah should join in her husband's worship, and pour out her full heart in the energy of a prophetic inspiration? What place could be more fitting for this than the tabernacle where Jehovah had fixed His visible dwelling-place? What moment more appropriate than that at which she restored to Jehovah the gift she had received from His hands for His service? II. Nor, secondly, can we agree with the assertion that the tone and contents of the hymn mark it to be an old war song, a thanksgiving for victory over enemies. There is no direct mention of an Israelite victory: the defeat of the mighty warriors is but an incidental illustration: it is but one of the contrasts introduced to show how Jehovah's government is exercised in the world. III. The third objection is at first sight more forcible. The mention of a king might seem to argue a later date. But even this difficulty is only superficial. Why should not Hannah have spoken of a king, the anointed of Jehovah? The promises made to Abraham pointed to the eventual establishment of a kingdom for the chosen people. "I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee." "I will bless Sarah, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her." And at this period the desire for a king was manifestly stirring in the national mind. Already the men of Israel had proposed a hereditary monarchy when they said to Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son;" and though he refused, saying, "The Lord shall rule over you," it must have been felt that the establishment of a monarchy could not be far distant. A monarchy, indeed, was not the ideal form of government for the chosen people. In demanding it they were actuated by unbelief and mistrust of Jehovah, and therefore it was displeasing to Him, for it was a "rejection of Him." Yet it bore its part in the preparation for Messiah's coming; it was incorporated as an element in the evolution of the divine purposes. And why should not Hannah be inspired with a prophetic foresight to see that at length the king was inevitable, and to pray that Jehovah would make his rule effectual? The review of the Divine character, and the Divine government of the world is a theme which would most naturally suggest itself to one who felt that she had just experienced a manifestation of those principles in her own case. Let us turn to a consideration of the leading idea of the hymn. The problem of the mysterious and incalculable vicissitudes of fortune is one which has presented itself to all ages. What is the cause of them? It is *Φθόνος* or *Némeōis*, said the Greek. The Envy of the Gods, drags the over-prosperous down to the abyss of ruin, and smites down the pride of man in middle course. He counted the Gods to be beings of like passions with himself, slaves of jealousy and spitefulness. Some, in the spirit of a truer creed, denied such a degrading hypothesis: and saw Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, dogging the footsteps of the sinner, and exacting from him to the utmost the penalty of his transgression. It is Necessity, answered the ancient Roman, stern, inexorable, heartless Necessity, before whose fiat we must bow, whose decisions we cannot investigate. It is Fortune, laughed the sceptical Horace:

"Fortune exulting in her cruel task,
And bent on playing out her heartless game."

But centuries before Greek or Roman faced the problem, its solution had been revealed to the Hebrew mind. The Hebrew prophetess sees no angry, spiteful deity, jealous of man's prosperity: no stern and pitiless fate: no fickle and capricious Fortune at the helm of the universe; but a personal Ruler, holy, just, omniscient, almighty, governing in truth and righteousness. It was a truth which had an especial value for the Israelite of that age. He had no clear revelation of a future life: and without the knowledge of a future life the mystery of human existence is a thousandfold more perplexing. His faith was often sorely tried, because "he saw the wicked in such prosperity." The unmerited chastisement of righteous men like Job seemed almost like a flaw in the justice of the Almighty: and he had need to brace his moral consciousness by recourse to a confession such as this, declaring in no equivocal terms the universal rule of Jehovah,

founded in righteousness and truth. For us the reiteration of this truth is valuable for a widely different reason. The study of second causes, the formation of laws, physical, social, moral, tend to obscure our view of the Great First Cause, and to obliterate our conception of the direct personal control exercised by the ruler of the universe. "Jehovah bringeth low and lifteth up. By strength shall no man prevail." There is a personal and a national lesson in this. We are forced, all of us, some time in our lives, to learn our own impotence, our littleness, our dependence on a power not our own. There is a lesson for nations here too. It is God who lifteth up, it is God who gives national prosperity; the continuance of that prosperity is surely conditional upon the observance of His laws, and those laws will be best observed when the national conscience acknowledges that its prosperity springs ultimately from a higher source than its own genius or industry. Pride and self-confidence have ever been the parents of corruption and degeneracy. (*A. F. Kirkpatrick, D.D.*) *Hannah's song of thanksgiving*:—The emotion that filled Hannah's breast after she had granted Samuel to the Lord, and left him settled at Shiloh, was one of triumphant joy. In her song we see no trace of depression, like that of a bereaved and desolate mother. Some may be disposed to think less of Hannah on this account; they may think she would have been more of a true mother if something of human regret had been apparent in her song. But surely we ought not to blame her if the Divine emotion that so completely filled her soul excluded for the time every ordinary feeling. This was Hannah's feeling, as it afterwards was that of Elizabeth, and still more of the Virgin Mary, and it is no wonder that their songs, which bear a close resemblance to each other, should have been used by the Christian Church to express the very highest degree of thankfulness. Hannah's heart was enlarged as she thought how many lowly souls that brought their burden to Him were to be relieved; and how many empty and hungry hearts, pining for food and rest, were to find how He "satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." But it would seem that her thoughts took a still wider sweep. Looking on herself as representing the nation of Israel, she seems to have felt that what had happened to her on a small scale was to happen to the nation on a large. May not the Holy Spirit have given her a glimpse of the great truth—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given?" And may not this high theme have been the cause of that utter absence of human regret, that apparent want of motherly heart-sinking, which we mark in the song? When we examine the substance of the song more carefully, we find that Hannah derives her joy from four things about God:—I. HIS NATURE (vv. 2-3). In the second and third verses we find comfort derived from (1) God's holiness, (2) His unity, (3) His strength, (4) His knowledge, and (5) His justice. (1) The holiness, the spotlessness of God is a source of comfort, "There is none holy as the Lord." To the wicked this attribute is no comfort, but only a terror. Left to themselves, men take away this attribute, and, like the Greeks and Romans and other pagans, ascribe to their gods the lusts and passions of poor human creatures. Yet to those who can appreciate it, how blessed a thing is the holiness of God! (2) His unity gives comfort—"There is none beside Thee." (3) His strength gives comfort—"Neither is there any rock like our God." (4) His knowledge gives comfort—"The Lord is a God of knowledge." He sees all secret wickedness, and knows how to deal with it. His eye is on every plot hatched in the darkness. He knows His faithful servants, what they aim at, what they suffer, what a strain is often put on their fidelity. (5) His justice gives comfort. "By His actions are weighed." Their true quality is ascertained; what is done for mean, selfish ends stands out before Him in all its native ugliness, and draws down the retribution that is meet. II. GOD'S HOLY GOVERNMENT (vers. 3-8). The main feature of God's providence dwelt on here is the changes that occur in the lot of certain classes. And these changes are the doing of God. If nothing were taught here but that there are great vicissitudes of fortune among men, then a lesson would come from it alike to high and low—let the high beware lest they glory in their fortune, let the low not sink into dejection and despair. If it be further borne in mind that these changes of fortune are all in the hands of God, a further lesson arises, to beware how we offend God, and to live in the earnest desire to enjoy His favour. But there is a further lesson. The class of qualities that are here marked as offensive to God are pride, self-seeking, self-sufficiency both in ordinary matters and in their spiritual development. III. HIS MOST GRACIOUS TREATMENT OF HIS SAINTS. IV. Hannah rejoices in that dispensation of mercy that was coming

in connection with God's "king, His anointed" (v. 10). Guided by the Spirit, she sees that a king is coming, that a kingdom is to be set up, and ruled over by the Lord's anointed. Did she catch a glimpse of what was to happen under such kings as David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah? Did she see in prophetic vision the loving care of such kings for the welfare of the people, their holy zeal for God, their activity and earnestness in doing good? And did the glimpse of these coming benefits suggest to her the thought of what was to be achieved by Him who was to be the anointed one, the Messiah in a higher sense? We can hardly avoid giving this scope to her song. What is the great lesson of this song? That for the answer to prayer, for deliverance from trial, for the fulfilment of hopes, for the glorious things yet spoken of the city of our God, our most cordial thanksgivings are due to God. (*W. G. Blaikie.*) *Spiritual gladness*:—as the odours and sweet smells of Arabia are carried by the winds and air into the neighbouring provinces, so that before travellers come thither they have the scent of that aromatic country; so the joys of heaven are by the sweet breathings and gales of the Holy Ghost blown into the hearts of believers, and the sweet smells of the upper paradise are conveyed into the gardens of the churches. Those joys which are stirred up in us by the Spirit before we get to heaven are a pledge of what we may expect hereafter. (*T. Manton, D.D.*)

Vers. 2, 3. There is none holy as the Lord.—*The four perfections of God*:—1. She speaks of his holiness; "There is none holy as the Lord." St. Mary the Virgin echoes her, when in her song she says: "Holy is his name." This would be a very sad thought for sinners, whose thoughts, and words, and actions, are so unholy, were it not that our Lord Jesus Christ has atoned for our sins by His death, and has also in our nature led a perfectly holy life; and that, if we join ourselves to Him by faith, God looks at us through Him, and accepts us for His sake. 2. Next Hannah speaks of the power of God. "Neither is there any rock," says she, "like our God." So St. Mary in her song calls God, "He that is mighty;" and says, "He hath showed strength with his arm." So the people of God may securely trust in Him because of His great power. And now observe what particular exercise of God's power both Hannah and St. Mary celebrated. It is this, that when men grow proud and ambitious, He immediately, to however great a height of power they may have reached, strikes them down. God's favourite way of displaying His power in the kingdom of Providence is to cast down the proud and lift up the humble. 3. The third attribute of God which Hannah speaks of is His wisdom. "The Lord," she says, "is a God of knowledge," and she gives this proof of it, that "by him actions are weighed." His knowledge reaches to the depths of the character; He is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." He does not take an action for a good one, because it looks good outside. It is interesting to observe that St. Mary in her song does not make any explicit mention of God's wisdom or knowledge, though she does mention twice over another attribute, of which Hannah makes no explicit mention. This is the fairest and most smiling of all God's attributes—His mercy, that is to say, His goodness to the undeserving and ill-deserving. Hannah's song was delivered unto the Law, while God's people were yet under that sterner and more severe dispensation, which designedly made them more acquainted with His holiness, and power, and wisdom, than with His love. But St. Mary's song, ushering in as it did the birth of Christ, could not possibly be without an allusion to the tender mercy of our God,—the mercy which led Him to give His Son out of His bosom for the salvation of the lost. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Ver. 2. Neither is there any rock like our God.—*God compared to a Rock*:—I. GOD IS HERE DESCRIBED AS A ROCK. God frequently compares himself to a rock, and that for his people's encouragement. 1. He is compared to a rock, because, as a shelter, defence, refuge, every perfection of His nature is as their bulwark round about His people. 2. He is likewise spoken of as a rock, because in ancient days also they oftentimes made rocks their habitation. There are the inhabitants of the rocks (*Jeremiah. 48. ver. 28.*) "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God, in Him will I trust." They dwell in His love and in his attributes, and find them the place of abode and the place of happiness too. 3. But He also bears the name of a rock because He is the shade of His people. Thus we read in the fifth verse of the one hundred and twenty-first Psalm, "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right

hand." So are God's perfections the shade of His people, which preserveth them from the searching heat; and they are just as grateful to their souls. II. IN WHAT PECULIAR SENSE IS IT, THAT GOD STANDS RELATED TO HIS PEOPLE AS THEIR ROCK, AS THEY PASS THROUGH THIS POOR DESERT WORLD. 1. I might first of all say, it is because of His everlasting love towards them, in that He has made Himself to be their rock—in that He has given Himself to be their portion—in that He has made Himself over them to be their God, even unto death. 2. And as the Spirit of God leadeth the soul onwards, then it begins to see the great mystery of justice in salvation. Thus we see in what point of view it is that the Lord God Almighty is the rock of His people, and how He becomes so in their passage through this poor vale of tears. First of all, by the sovereign gift of Himself, according to His everlasting love, and then by the effectual power of the Holy Spirit in drawing poor souls out of the world's population through His beloved One, that they may take rest in Himself. III. THERE IS NO ROCK LIKE OUR GOD," neither is there any rock like our God." A Socinian's God cannot be compared to our God—a God that forgives from mere pity—A God that suffers His own law to be trampled on, and His own justice to be set at nought, in order to make way for the display of His own mercy—that God cannot be compared to our God. The man who talks about the gospel, and lives in sin, who talks of being happy in God, and mistakes accurate notions for conversion of heart, and a well-balanced creed for the love of Christ to the soul, that man's God cannot be compared to our God; for our God is holy. The self-righteous pharisee in looking to his God, cannot think that he can be compared to our God. The God that can take his poor formal services—the very idea at once not only shows his folly, but exhibits the low character of the God he worships. Oh, there is no rock like our God! 1. There is no rock so secure as is this rock. Oh, how blessed is that security which does not admit of one crevice, of one opening for the storm to enter! 2. Oh, the breadth of this blessed rock! Is there one case now so bad, is there one circumstance in itself so desperate, that we cannot say there is in that rock a breadth for all comers? 3. And oh, who shall say what there is inside this rock! The God of our salvation is a satisfying portion. (J. H. Evans.)

Vers. 3, 4. **Talk no more exceeding proudly.**—*The different forms of pride*:—1. The pride of conquest. "The bows of the mighty men are broken." 2. The pride of abundance. There may be pride in any and every condition of life. Children, as well as grown people, may be very proud; and God hates pride in the young as much as in the old. Some children,—nay, and some grown people, too, are proud of fine clothes, and like to strut about while the gloss is new on their wearing apparel. Others are proud of being clever; whereas they should regard their talents as a trust given them by God, of which they will have to render an account. Others are vain of their beauty; and then perhaps their beauty is taken away by some loathsome complaint, or worse still, it becomes a snare to them, as Absalom's fine long hair was the means of bringing him to his end. (Dean Goulburn.) **The Lord is a Lord of Knowledge.**—*The knowledge of God*:—Knowledge considers things absolutely, and in themselves: wisdom considers the respects and relations of things one to another, and under the notion of means and ends. The knowledge of God, is a perfect comprehension of the nature of all things, with all their powers and qualities, and circumstances: the wisdom of God, is a perfect comprehension of the respects and relations of things one to another; of their harmony and opposition; of their fitness and unfitness to such and such ends. I. FOR THE PROOF OF IT, I shall attempt it two ways. 1. From the dictates of natural light and reason. Unless natural reason assures us, that God is endowed with knowledge and understanding, it is in vain to inquire after Divine revelation. For to make any revelation credible, two things are requisite on the part of the revealer, ability and integrity. The Divine perfections are not to be proved by way of demonstration, but by way of conviction, by showing the absurdities of the contrary. (1.) It is a perfection, and therefore belongs to God. (2.) Knowledge is to be found in some of the creatures, and therefore is much more in God the Creator, because it is derived from Him. "Understand, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" (3.) The denial of this perfection to God, argues many other

imperfections in the Divine nature. Nothing would more eclipse the Divine nature, than to take away this perfection from it; this would bring an universal obscurity upon God's other perfections; this would be to put out the light of heaven, and to turn the brightness of the morning into the shadow of death. If we remove this perfection from God, we deny His wisdom. And we weaken His power. What an impotent and ineffectual thing would power be without knowledge! What irregular things would it produce! And, consequently, we take away His providence; for without knowledge, there can be no counsel, no provision for the future, no government of the world. And that is not all; for without knowledge there could be no such thing as goodness, for He is not good that does good out of ignorance, or from a blind necessity. There could be no veracity, nor justice, nor mercy in God; for all these suppose knowledge.

2. From Scripture, and Divine revelation. I will only instance in two or three: (Job. xxxvi. 4.) "He that is perfect in knowledge, is with thee." (Chap. xxxvii. 16.) "Dost thou know the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?" (1) That God takes notice of all our actions. The Scripture frequently mentions this: (Psalm cxxix. 1. &c. Prov. v. 21.) "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings." (Jer. xxxii. 19.) "Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." (2.) He is a curious observer, one that takes exact notice of all that we do. (3.) He taketh notice of those actions which are most secret and hidden, the good as well as bad.

2. *God knows the hearts and thoughts of men*; which implies these two things: God perfectly knows the hearts of men (Jer. xvii. 10). (1 Kings. viii. 39) "For Thou, even Thou, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." (1 Chron. xxvii. 9). "He knoweth the secrets of the hearts" (Prov. xv. 11). (1.) The reason of every man's mind tells him, that the supreme Being whom we call God, is endowed with all perfection, and among His other perfections, that He excels in knowledge. (2.) The natural fears of men are likewise a secret acknowledgment of this.

2. That to have a perfect and thorough knowledge of men's hearts, is the peculiar prerogative of God. 3. God's knowledge of future events. This God proposes as the way to discern the true God from idols (Isaiah xli. 21, &c.). (1.) That God knows future events. (2.) That He only knows them. Objection the first: The impossibility of the thing. The certainty of all knowledge depends upon the certainty of the object; therefore there cannot be a certain and determinate knowledge of any thing, but what is certainly and determinately true; but future events, which may or may not be, have no certain and determinate truth; that is, it is not certain either that they will or will not be, because they have no certain cause; therefore there can be no infallible knowledge concerning them. 1. I might say, with a very fair probability, that the certainty of knowledge doth not depend upon the uncertainty of the cause, but of the object, which may be certain, though the cause be contingent. 2. Though we could not explain the possibility of God's knowing future contingencies, much less the manner how; yet we are sufficiently assured that God doth know them. 3. It is very unreasonable to expect we should know all the ways which infinite knowledge hath of knowing things. We have but finite faculties and measures, which bear no proportion to infinite powers and objects. Secondly, It is objected, that if we can admit such a knowledge in God as seems contradictory and impossible to our reason, why may we not allow and frame such notions of His goodness and justice. To this I answer, There is a great difference between those perfections of God which are imitable, and those which are not. Knowledge of future events is a perfection wherein we are not bound to be like God; and if we are assured of the thing, that He doth know them, it is not necessary that we should know the manner of it, and disentangle it from contradiction and impossibility: but it is otherwise in God's goodness and justice, which are imitable; he that imitates, endeavours to be like something that he knows, and we must have a clear idea and notion of that which we would bring ourselves to the likeness of; these perfections of God we are capable of knowing, and therefore the knowledge of these perfections is chiefly recommended to us in Scripture (Jer. ix. 24). The third objection is made up of several inconveniences that would follow from God's knowledge of future events. 1. It would prejudice the liberty of the creature. Answer.—God's fore-knowledge lays no necessity upon the event; in every event, we may consider the effect in itself, or with relation to the cause, and the manner how

it comes to pass; considered in itself, it is future—with relation to its causes, it is contingent. God sees it as both. 2. If God infallibly foreknows what men will do, how can He be serious in His exhortations to repentance, in His expectation of it, and His grieving for the impenitency of men? Answer.—All these are founded in the liberty of our actions. God exhorts to repentance, and expects it, because by His grace we may do it: He is said to grieve for our impenitency, because we may do otherwise, and will not. Exhortations are not in vain themselves, but very proper to their end. Having answered the objections against God's foreknowing future events, I proceed to show that God only knows future events (Isa. xlv. 6, 7). I have now done with the first general head I proposed to be spoken to from these words; viz., To prove that this attribute of knowledge belongs to God. I proceed to the II. TO CONSIDER THE PERFECTION AND PREROGATIVE OF THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE; which I shall speak to in these following particulars: 1. God's knowledge is present and actual, His eye is always open, and every thing is in the view of it. The knowledge of the creature is more power than act. 2. God's knowledge is an intimate and thorough knowledge, whereby He knows the very nature and essence of things. The knowledge which we have of things is but in part, but outward and superficial. 3. God's knowledge is clear and distinct. Our understandings in the knowledge of things are liable to great confusion; we are often deceived with the near likeness and resemblance of things, and mistake one thing for another. 4. God's knowledge is certain and infallible. We are subject to doubt and error in our understanding of things. 5. The knowledge of God is easy, and without difficulty. We must dig deep for knowledge, take a great deal of pains to know a little. 6. The knowledge of God is universal, and extends to all objects. We know but a few things; our ignorance is greater than our knowledge. III. I come now TO DRAW SOME INFERENCES FROM THE SEVERAL PARTS OF THIS DISCOURSE. 1. From the perfection of God's knowledge. (1.) The perfection of the Divine knowledge calls for our veneration. (2.) We may hence learn humility, and that on this double account—as we have all our knowledge from Him: "What have we that we have not received?" (3.) This is a matter of comfort and encouragement; He knows our wants and our weaknesses. 2. From God's knowing our secret actions, I infer, (1.) If God sees our most secret actions, this discovers and confutes the secret atheism of many. He that commits the most secret sin, denies the omniscience of God. (2.) Live as those that believe this: be continually under the power of this apprehension, that God takes a particular and exact notice of all thy actions. 3. God's knowledge of the heart teaches us, (1.) The folly of hypocrisy: how vain is it to make a show of that outwardly, which inwardly, and in our hearts, we are not; to put on a mask of religion, and paint ourselves beautifully without. (2.) If God know your hearts, then endeavour to approve your hearts to Him; charge yourselves with inward purity and holiness. (3.) This is matter of encouragement to us in many cases: in our secret troubles (Psalm cxlii. 3). (4.) This renders all the deep and profound policies of wicked men a vain thing: "The Lord knows the thoughts of men, that they are vanity" (Psalm xciv. 11): because He knows them, and can defeat them. (5.) If God only knows the hearts of men, then "what art thou, O man, that judgest another's heart?" 4. From God's knowledge of future events, we may learn, (1.) The vanity of astrology, and all other arts that pretend to foretell future events, things that depend on the will of free agents. (2.) Refer future things to God, who only knows them; trust Him with all events; "cast your care upon Him." (J. Tillotson, D.D.) By Him actions are weighed.—*Actions weighed by God*:—In all God's dealings with us there is one thing of which we may be perfectly sure,—they will be done deliberately; delicately, by measurement, with accuracy, in proportion. We are quite safe there from all hastiness and inconsideration—those two banes of human judgment. Job's prayer is always answered, "Let me be weighed in the balance." Alike the greatest and the least—from those giants of nature, the everlasting hills, down to the dust of the earth, and to the smallest thought which ever flashed through a man's mind—all are weighed. I. LET US BE SURE THAT WE GIVE ACTIONS THEIR PROPER PLACE IN THE PLAN OF OUR SALVATION. Actions never save a man. Actions have, strictly speaking, nothing to do with our salvation. But actions occupy four parts in the great scheme of our redemption. 1. They are the tests of life—"He that abideth in Me, the same bringeth forth much fruit." 2. They

are the language of love—"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." 3. They glorify God before men—"Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven." 4. And although they are not the meritorious causes of our final rewards, yet they determine the degrees and proportions of our final state—"He will reward every man according as his work shall be." II. IT WOULD BE THE GREATEST PRESUMPTION ON OUR PART TO SAY HOW GOD WEIGHS OUR ACTIONS. It is sufficient to know that He does weigh them. That hand cannot err. But we may carry out God's own metaphor a little way and conceive it thus: 1. On the one hand is the action; on the other, what that action might have been, and ought to have been, and, but for our sin, would have been. 2. On the one side the action we did; on the other, the action we meant to do, and promised to do. 3. On the one side, what we have received; on the other, what we have rendered. III. WHEN GOD HOLDS THE SCALES OF HIS CHILDREN'S ACTIONS, He puts in something of His own over and above, and when He puts that in, the beam that had preponderated against us, turns the other way, and "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." We should be careful not to usurp an office which only Omniscience can rightly exercise. IV. WE MUST ALL FEEL THAT WHEN WE ARE WEIGHED IN THESE HOLY SCALES THE VERDICT CAN ONLY BE, "Tekel; thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." But the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross. That death is on the one side, and the whole world's guilt is on the other. God is "weighing them"—the blood of Christ and the sins of all mankind. God has balanced you and your substitute, and God is satisfied for His sake for ever and ever. (*J. Vaughan.*) *The King's weighings*:—It is very beautiful to see how the saints of old time were accustomed to find comfort in their God. Thus Hannah thinks of the Lord, and comforts herself in His name. Like others of God's instructed people, Hannah was very happy in the thought of God's holiness. Hannah also turned her heart to celebrate the power of Jehovah. Hannah touched, in her rapturous hymn, upon the wisdom of the Lord. Hannah also derived comfort from the fact that God is strictly just. I. The staple of our discourse will consist of a consideration of THE PROCESS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT, which is continually going on: "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." The figure of weighing suggests a thorough testing, and an accurate estimating of the matters under consideration. 1. Our first note here shall stand thus,—this is not as man dreams. Consider, next, that this form of procedure is not as man judges. By men actions are judged flippantly, but "by God actions are weighed." Men are exceedingly apt to measure actions by their consequences. How wrong! it is to measure actions by results, rather than by their own intrinsic character! A man upon the railway neglected to turn a switch, but by the care of another no accident occurred. Is he to be excused? Another man was equally negligent, certainly not more so; but in his case the natural result followed—there was a collision, and many lives were lost. The last man was blamed most deservedly, but yet the former offender was equally guilty. If we do wrong and no harm comes of it, we are not thereby justified. Yea, if we did evil and good came of it, the evil would be just as evil. It is not the result of the action but the action itself which God weighs. He who swindles and prospers is just as vile as he whose theft lodged him in prison. He who acts uprightly, and becomes a loser thereby, is just as honoured before God as if his honesty had led on to wealth. If we seek to do good and fail in our endeavour, we shall be accepted for the attempt, and not condemned for the failure. If a man gives his life to convert the heathen, and he does not succeed, he shall have as much reward of God as he who turns a nation to the faith. I would now have you note that this weighing is a very searching business. "By him actions are weighed." A man enters a goldsmith's shop and says, "Here is old gold to sell. See, I have quite a lot of it." "Yes," says the goldsmith, "Let me weigh it." "Weigh it? Why, look at the quantity; it fills this basket." What is the goldsmith doing? Looking for his weights and certain acids by which he means to test the metal. When he has used his acids, he puts the trinkets into the scale. "You are not going to buy by weight?" "I never buy in any other way," says the goldsmith. "But there is such a quantity." "That may be, but I buy by weight." It is always so with God in all our actions: he estimates their real weight. We may hammer out our little gold, and make a great show of it, but the Lord is not mocked or deceived. Every dealing between us and God will have to be by a just balance and standard.

weight. And in what way will He weigh it? The weights are somewhat of this sort. The standard is His just and holy law, and all which falls short of that is sin. Any want of conformity to the law of God is sin, and by so much our acts are found wanting. Remember this, ye who would justify yourselves. The Lord also enquires how much of sincerity is found in the action. The Lord also weighs actions according to their motives. Another mode of judging is by our spirit and temper. Sometimes actions may be weighed by the circumstances which surround them. Multitudes of men are honest because they never had a chance of making a grand haul by setting up a bubble company—which is the modern mode of thieving. The lion in the Zoological Gardens is very good because he is behind iron bars, and many a man's goodness owes more to the iron bars of his position than to his own heart and motive. Another weight to put in the scale is this,—Was there any godliness about your life? Once more—have we lived by faith? for without faith it is impossible to please God; and if there be no faith in our life then are we nothing worth. 4. This weighing of our lives must be exceedingly accurate because it is done personally by God himself. I once heard a story (I do not know if it is true) of an old banker who said to his son to whom he bequeathed the business, "This is the key of our large iron safe: take great care of it. The bank depends upon that safe; let the people see you have such a safe, but never open it unless the bank should be in the utmost difficulty." The bank went on all right as long as the iron safe was fast closed, but at last there came a run upon it, and in his greatest extremity the young gentleman opened it, and he found in it—nothing at all. That was the stock of the bank: poverty carefully concealed, imaginary wealth winning confidence, and living on the results. Are there not many persons who all their lives long are doing a spiritual banking business, and deriving a considerable income of repute from that which will turn out to be mere nothing? Beware of driving a trade for eternity upon fictitious capital, for failure will be the sure result. 5. Again, I want you to notice that this weighing is carried on at this present time—"By Him actions are weighed." As at the Bank all moneys are put through a process by which the light coins are detected, so evermore our life passes over the great weighing-machine of the Lord's justice, and He separates that which is short in weight from that which is precious, doing this at the moment as infallibly as at the judgment-day. "By Him actions are weighed." This is true of all of us—not of open sinners only, but of those who are considered saints. 6. And one day, to conclude this point, the King's weighing will be published—set up where men and angels shall read them. II. THE HUMBLING NATURE OF THIS CONSIDERATION. "Talk no more so exceedingly proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." The fact of Divine judgment on ourselves should for ever prevent our insulting over others. Next, I think we must give up all idea of speaking proudly in the presence of God. If ever you have had the weighing process carried on in your own heart I know you have given up all hope of being saved by your own merit or strength. If conscience has been awakened, and if the law has fulfilled its office upon you, you have given up all idea of appearing before God in your own righteousness. III. THE POSITION IN WHICH ALL THIS LEAVES US. If God weighs our actions and we are thereby found wanting, and can only cry, "Guilty" in his sight, what then? Then we are in God's hands. That is where I wish every one of my hearers to feel himself to be. But who is the Lord? 1. First, according to Hannah, He is a God of salvation. Next, according to Hannah's song, He is the God who delights in reversing the order of things. He throws down those who are on high, and sets up those that are down. 3. Once more, this God is one who delights to carry on strange processes in the hearts of His people. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Divine knowledge of human action.* God's knowledge extends to—I. THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE. There is nothing in any part of this universe which comes not beneath His glance. Our imagination fails us as we try to think what is included in the knowledge of God in the wide sphere of the physical creation. II. ALL EINEITE INTELLIGENCES. We should conclude from the exercise of our reason, and Scripture fully confirms the belief (Coloss. i. 16), that beside and above our own, are many grades of spiritual intelligences peopling the vast spaces of the heavens. The all-embracing wisdom of God must include a perfect knowledge of these—of their nature, of their capacities, of their

habits, of their life. But let us rather pursue that which practically concerns us, our Father's knowledge of His human children. God knew from the beginning—1. The possibilities of our nature; how high we could rise and how far we might sink, how much we could enjoy and how much we could endure. 2. The course of human history. He saw what use and what misuse of his great opportunity man would make, how he would be overcome in the day of trial, and what long and dark course of sin and suffering he would pursue. 3. Our capacity to rise. III. THE WORTH AND THE UNWORTHINESS OF HUMAN LIFE AND ACTION. By the God of knowledge "actions are weighed." 1. What is included in human action? We must not take a restricted view of those "actions" which are weighed by the Judge of all. They include—(1) All visible movement, all overt deeds; the things which our hands execute, the paths which our feet tread, the activities of the busy world, the discharge of household duties, our indulgences, our studies, our devotions. But they include very much more than this; they embrace (2) all utterance, both premeditated and casual. The distinction between words and deeds is only true in part. It is often the case that speaking is the finest and noblest action. (3) All thoughts, feelings, and determination are the actions of the soul. The spirit of man is constantly at work when no sound is heard and no deed is witnessed. We may go so far as to say that human action includes (4) our fixed attitude of soul—especially that which we deliberately take toward the Father and the Saviour of our spirit. 2. Weights in the Divine balance. By what does God determine the worth or the guilt of an action? (1) By the purity or impurity of our motive (Matt. vi. 1, 5, 16; xxiii. 15; 1. Cor. xiii. 1). (2) By the measure of difficulty to be mastered. God "knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." He requires of us "according to that we have, and not according to that we have not." (3) By the presence or absence of privilege. Far more was expected from those who had "the law" than from those who had it not (Matt. v. 46, 47; Rom. ii. 12). (IV. *Clarkson, B.A.*) *The even balance*:—"Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite." He who "hath weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance" "weigheth the spirit:" and by Him actions are weighed. Looking forward, faithful Abraham said: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" I. THE TRUTH ITSELF. "By him actions are weighed:"—1. Unerringly. "The Lord is a God of knowledge;" and all of us may say with the Psalmist, "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off: Thou art acquainted with all my ways." "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth." 2. In connection with and having regard to their antecedents. When the Israelites provoked the Lord at the Sea—"even at the Red Sea"—their sinfulness was aggravated by their want of remembrance of "the multitude of His mercies." On the other hand, the moral value of worthy actions is enhanced by relation to unfavourable antecedents. To the Canaanitish woman Jesus said: "O woman, great is thy faith." 3. In connection with the degree of knowledge at the time possessed. That Abraham obeyed and went out, "not knowing whither he went," and that "he offered up Isaac," quite in the dark as to the Divine design. On the other hand, the sin of Saul of Tarsus, when he was "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious," great as it was, was far below what it would have been had he then believed that Jesus was the Christ. 4. In connection with and having regard to the circumstances under which they are performed. 5. In connection with and having regard to the motive from which they spring. When Hezekiah displayed "all that was found in his treasures" it was the character of his motives, so peculiarly unbecoming amid such great and tender mercies from the Lord, that had specially to do with his subsequent humiliation under the providence of Him who "weigheth the spirits" (Isa. xx. 13-17). "It was the loving motive of Mary, who took "very costly and precious ointment" and anointed the feet of Jesus, that led to the signal honour conferred by our Lord. II. REFLECTIONS. 1. In view of the great truth, that "by Him actions are weighed," how forcible and full of suggestiveness the words: "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first" (Mark x. 31). 2. How differently should different minds be affected by the truth now under consideration. "I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast My name." 3. What gratitude should be enkindled by the assurance that the Lord, by whom actions are weighed, "delighteth in mercy." "A false balance is not good": and "they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among them-

selves, are not wise" (II. Cor. iii. 2). It is well to feel with Job—"Let me be weighed in an even balance." (*J. Elliot.*) *The true valuation of men's actions*:—The man of science has electrometers, spectroscopes, gossamer gauges, fairy balances, magic tests; he can do the most wonderful things in the way of analysing physical bodies, in measuring subtle natural forces. But all this delicacy of criticism is mere barbarism compared with the criticism of God. "The Lord weigheth the spirits." He puts thoughts, tastes, emotions into the scales; with severer tests than we dream, the hidden qualities and principles of every heart are made manifest in his sight. It is reported that an American physician, Dr. Upham, of Salem, Massachusetts, recently demonstrated to an audience to whom he was lecturing the variations of the pulse in certain diseases by causing the lecture-room to be placed in telegraphic communication with the City Hospital at Boston, fifteen miles distant; and then, by means of a special apparatus and a vibrating ray of magnesian light, the pulse beats were exhibited upon the wall. There is not a throb of our heart but it makes its sign on the great white throne. "He knoweth our thoughts afar off." "Thou hast set our sins before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." And what stands thus revealed is bound to meet with just retribution. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Actions revealed in their true light*:—Men forget their sinfulness in their prosperity. If the soldier wins the battle he concludes that his cause was right; if the politician wins his election he concludes that his policy is right; if the merchant accumulates a fortune he considers that heaven has endorsed his principles, whatever they may be. And yet this line of argument may be, and often is, utterly false. A man may be a conqueror, and yet his glory be his shame; he may attain honour, and his scarlet robe be the fitting sign of his scarlet sins; he may grow rich, and every coin in his coffers witness against him; he may possess every means of happiness, and yet have forfeited all right to happiness itself. "His honour rooted in dishonour still." Many a man has a certain sense of self-respect who ought to have none, for his self-respect is based on his wealth and position, not on his personal merit; on his clothes, not on his character. So by various methods men disguise their sins from themselves and from others; villains before heaven, they are gentlemen, moralists, saints before their fellows. In Venice, Quinet was shown a helmet of studied beauty, constructed to crush the heads of the accused. "Thus," the philosopher remarks, "Venice was artistic even in her tortures." How many men are artistic in their sins. Cleverly disguised as sin may be, it will inevitably suffer detection. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.—*Killed, then made alive*:—We must be emptied of self before we can be filled with grace; we must be stripped of our rags before we can be clothed with righteousness; we must be unclothed that we may be clothed; wounded, that we may be healed; killed, that we may be made alive; buried in disgrace, that we may rise in holy glory. These words, "Sown in corruption, that we may be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, that we may be raised in glory; sown in weakness, that we may be raised in power," are as true of the soul as of the body. To borrow an illustration from the surgeon's art: the bone that is set wrong must be broken again, in order that it may be set aright. I press this truth on your attention. It is certain that a soul filled with self has no room for God; and like the inn at Bethlehem, crowded with meaner guests, a heart pre-occupied by pride and her godless train, has no chamber within which Christ may be born in us "the hope of glory." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *From death to life*:—This sentence has its own plain and natural meaning, which lies upon its surface like dust of gold; it has, moreover, a spiritual meaning, which needs to be digged for like silver in the mine. I. In reference to ITS FIRST AND MOST MANIFEST MEANING, "The Lord bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." Here the agency of God, in life and death, is clearly revealed to us. How well it is to discern the Lord's hand in everything. We ascribe events to second causes, to the laws of nature, and I know not what. I think it were better far, if we could go back to the good old way of talking and speaking of the Lord as being in everything. While we do not deny the laws of nature, nor decri the discoveries of science, we will suffer none of these to be hung up as a veil before our present God. 1. First of all, it should awaken gratitude. What a mercy it is that we are here this evening! 2. While it causes gratitude, it should compel consideration. "The Lord bringeth down to the grave," and it is his rule never to do any-

thing without a purpose. "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men for nought." There is always a "needs be." 3. The Lord's bringing us low and raising us up again, should cause great searching of heart. Suppose I had died when last I was sick: was I then prepared to die? 4. To those of us who are believers in Christ, restoration from sickness, and the privilege of again coming up to God's house after an absence from it through illness, should suggest renewed activity. Haste thee! for behind thee are the flying wheels of the chariot of death, and the axles thereof are growing red-hot with speed. Fly, man, if thou wouldst accomplish thy life-work, for thou hast not a moment to spare! Be watchful, brethren, for the Lord bringeth down to the grave, and from that grave he bringeth us not up again to work, though he will bring us up to the reward and to the rest which remain for the people of God. II. OUR TEXT SEEMS TO INDICATE A STATE OF HEART THROUGH WHICH THOSE PASS WHO ARE BROUGHT TO GOD. I shall speak now experimentally, for if there breathes one soul on earth that can speak experimentally here, I am that man. 1. The sinner is led, first of all, to hear his own sentence pronounced. 2. Further than this: the convinced sinner is often made to feel, not only the sentence and the justice of it, but the very horror of death itself. You may have read in the narrative of the old American war, of the execution of deserters. They were brought out one bright morning, while yet the dew was on the grass, and were bidden to kneel down each man upon his coffin, and then a file of soldiers stepped forth; the word was given, and each man fell upon his coffin in which he was to be buried. Such things as the punishment of deserters are common in every war, but what must be the horror of the man who stands there, knowing that the bullet is waiting to reach his heart? In the old wars, they used to have a black heart sewn on the man's breast, and all the soldiers were to take aim and fire at that. Why, the man must suffer a thousand deaths while he stood waiting for the word of command. I have stood there, spiritually; and there are hundreds here who have thus faced their eternal doom. 3. Then there is a yet further death which the convinced sinner is made to feel, and that is the death of inability. He feels himself brought into a perfect state of death, as if a stupor had gone through every nerve, and frozen every muscle rigidly in its place, so that even the lifting of his little finger to help himself appears to be beyond his power. The climax of your disease is just the dawn of my hopes; your direst poverty is the time when I expect to see you enriched, for when you are completely emptied and have nothing, then Jesus Christ will be your strength and your salvation. 4. No doubt, the man now sees death written upon all his hopes. There was a door through which I had hoped to enter eternal life. I had spent much time in painting it, and making it comely to look upon. It seemed to me to have a golden knocker, a marble threshold, and posts and lintels of mahogany, and I thought it was the door of life for me. But now what do I see? I see a great black cross adown it, and over it there is written, "Lord, have mercy upon us." This door is the door to heaven by my own good works, which I thought full sure would always be open to me; but lo, I see that all my best works are bad, and "Lord, have mercy upon us," is the highest thing my works can produce for me. The death of legal hope is the salvation of the soul. I like to see legal hope swung up like a traitor. There let him hang to rot before the sun, more cursed than any other that was ever hanged on a tree. No more, then, concerning this death—"The Lord bringeth down." But now a word or two of comfort for any of you who are brought down to this spiritual grave. There are many precious promises for such. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Remember the experience of Jonah. Let the hope of Jeremiah be your consolation: "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." And now notice that where God has thus killed and brought down, we may rest assured He will certainly bring up again. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 7. **The Lord maketh poor.**—*The rich and the poor:*—Every thing created is taught by God a lesson of dependence; the earth upon which we tread is subject to continual wants; the sea requires replenishing from its tributary streams. Man is a volume of wants, as is recorded in every page of his history. I. Let us consider **THE REAL WANTS OF THE POOR AND OF THE RICH.** For the most

cogent reasons, the truths of the Gospel are of unspeakable advantage to the poor man; his mind is as a great field wanting cultivation. The rich man has a certain advantage on this point; by education and literary opportunities, as well as by intercourse with men of information and well-regulated minds, he has the void supplied, and is generally preserved from the ready and fearful consequences to which the ignorant are a prey. But the rich man has this fearful counterpoise upon him:—The more his hand is filled, the more he is likely to forget the Giver of all gifts. The promoters of Socinian, Deistical, and even of Atheistical doctrines, are ever found among the merely intellectual and educated, rather than among the poor. The rich man too often is encircled by a glittering fence refusing entrance to all that have not the key to his heart, or who are not auxiliary to his enjoyments. The rich man does, indeed, want the Gospel: he needs a restraint upon his enjoyments. But if the rich man is thus a pauper in many things, how great a pauper is the poor man! Speaking in a sense, the poor man's mind requires to be occupied with subjects of thought; reasonings connected with morality must be encouraged there, or else, under temptations from lust, he will forget to reason like Joseph (Genesis xxxix. 9). When once he has found it easier to gain a shilling by fraud or mediacancy, than by industry and toil, farewell, a long farewell, to honest and painstaking exertion! The poor man needs to feel his true position; the general opinion with regard to the relative condition of the poor man is, in many respects, wrong. The poor man generally feels as if he were hardly dealt with, especially if he cannot trace his privations to any indiscretion of his own. He feels as if the rich man only was happy. He feels as if his condition were altogether disreputable—that he may be utterly and legitimately selfish, and that there is no sympathy-demandable save from rich and poor. Assuredly, whatever would correct such mistakes, would teach man his true position—giving him independence amid poverty, peace under privation, and contentment under adversity—such is true philosophy, worthy of being purchased at any price. Man, in poverty and neglect, wants resources. The uncultivated mind is often restless, and the tendency of the heart is, to explore the mysteries of sensual gratification, which, once tasted, are often resistless evermore. He flies to low excitements. Were a mind taught to seek luxury within itself, to be happy from some self-possessed and ever-flowing fountain, what a blessing would be conferred! Resources of a merely intellectual kind fall short of the mark. Higher and holier teachings must be introduced. II. THE ADAPTATION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. The greatest mistake, as concerns this life, into which any man may fall, is that of not knowing or of overlooking his true and indispensable friends. How true is this of the "poor man and the Gospel!" for, strange to say, there is no want which the Gospel will not either supply, mitigate, or convert into a blessing. A change of a most remarkable kind, and one which requires no little delicacy of delineation, is that which the reception of Gospel knowledge bestows upon the poor man, in unfolding to him the actual position in which he stands with regard to the rich man. He is not his superior, nor his equal, and yet there is a sense in which he is not his inferior. He sees the rich man occupying his proper station before God and man: he sees him in rank or office, and envies him not; he blesses God for every link in the chain, from the monarch on the throne to the beggar at the cross-road. He is not so curious to know in what exact part of the chain he, as a link, may be assigned a place: he knows it is a subordinate place, but he also trusts it is a useful one, and he knows that in the eye of his heavenly Father it is not an obscure or despised one. Vast and varied are the resources which are opened out to the poor in his "searching of the Scriptures." III. Lastly, let us consider THE POOR MAN'S PECULIAR BLESSINGS. He that must go daily to the fountain, cannot forget that such a fountain exists; and if it be a fountain of purity and pleasantness, it becomes all the dearer, as life extends. And he whose wants send him hourly to the Giver of living waters, is less likely to forget his benefactor. It is not matter of surprise, if the poor be called "rich in faith," seeing that they must live by faith. It is to him a blessing to be thus maintained in a spirit of continual liveliness and dependency. The bruised reed is ever a tender one, and the object of heavenly regard and compassion; so he is not left for a moment to himself. If the poor man is often tried and tempted, yet, his temptations are all of a character of urgency, to drive him to God; whereas, his neighbour, possessed of wealth, is often assailed by temptations, where influence is powerful, to lead him farther and farther from God. Amidst all these things, the heart is wound around the Gospel. Take this away, and what is life? (Thomas Drew.)

Ver. 8. **He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill; to set them among princes.**—*The poor raised out of the dust.*—I. BY THESE "POOR" some understand those who are literally beggars. One cannot doubt but that Hannah's heart did bear on the remembrance of her own comparatively obscure condition; I cannot doubt for a moment, that she had in her mind the consciousness that this Samuel was to be a judge, and a prophet in Israel; I do not for one moment doubt, that she remembered Gideon taken from his threshing-floor by the wine-press to be a judge in Israel. It is not generally true that God "takes the poor out of the dust, and lifts the beggar from the dunghill." The instances are rare in which He "sets them among princes, and makes them inherit thrones of glory." And I think the next verse takes us something above the mere letter; "He shall keep the feet of His saints." Some understand by it the Church of God in its low and lost condition; as fallen children of a fallen father. No doubt there is great glory in that interpretation. A sinner is a poor man; he is indeed one of the needy, in his poverty. A debtor? owing ten thousand talents. But there is an expression that will not allow me to think this to be the mind of God in this passage. He is spoken of, not only as poor, but as a "beggar." It is one thing for a man to be in "the dust," and on "the dunghill;" but it is another thing to know and feel it, and to cry to the Lord on account of it. A sense of beggary is wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost only. This is the life appointed of God for His saints on earth; it is their vocation. A very painful life it is. The more a man begs, the more he has; the more he has, the more he wants; the more he wants, the more he receives; and the more he receives, the more he begs. But one may say, it is also a happy life. Oh! the relief of a throne of grace! Great is the blessing connected with it. II. But observe now WHAT IS SAID OF THE LORD CONCERNING HIS TREATMENT OF THESE "POOR," THESE "BEGGARS." Now before we consider what the Lord does, consider for a moment what the Lord is. He is described here as "high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens." I believe God is Love; yet when one looks into the infinite, the eternal God centering His love in one's self, one so mean, so worthless, so below all His consideration, who that looks into it does not see there are lengths and depths and breadths and heights, that seem at once above the mind? In the consideration of all that God does, I would never desire to forget what God is. All that God does springs from what God is. His doings are great; but His nature is greater. The Lord looked on His poor suffering Israel in their Egypt state, and heard their cry; their miseries went up before Him and He remembered them. There is infinite pity, too, in it; for "He raises up" this poor man; we find, He raises him up. The Lord always goes beyond your desires; He never falls short of them. But I see, not only infinite pity, but marvellous grace in it. When He takes these beggars, where doth He seat them? Is it amongst delivered beggars? He sets them in the midst of "princes," and causes them "to inherit a throne of glory." (J. H. Evans.) *The riches of humility*:—The rain runs off the mountains into the valleys and low-lying meadows. Elevated regions, therefore, do not profit by it so much as the lowlands. The natural fact suggests a spiritual truth. "God's sweet dews and showers of grace," says Leighton, "slide off the mountains of pride and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile." This accounts for the fact that you occasionally see persons of high intellect and much culture destitute of the peace and contentment possessed by those of meaner attainments; lacking, too, in richness of moral nature, and usefulness of life. (W. Walters.) *Humility a source of honour*:—In the evening of the day that Sir Eardley Wilmot kissed the hand of his Sovereign, on being appointed Chief Justice, one of his sons, a youth, attended him to his bedside. "Now," said the father, "I will tell you, my son, a secret worth your knowing and remembering. The elevation I have met with in life, particularly this last instance of it, has not been owing to any superior merit or abilities, but to my humility, to my not having set up myself above others, and to a uniform endeavour to pass through life void of offence towards God and man." *Elevation of the lowly*:—Edward Smith, in his most interesting book, "Three Years in Central London," tells of a poor working man coming into the church exclaiming. "Before the Mission started I was a nobody here; but now I am a somebody." Yes, it is the mission of Christianity to make the lowliest man feel his personal dignity and his great importance as one of the workers of the world. (IV. L. Watkinson.) *Poor rising to distinction*:—So also it pleases God to give conspicu-

ous proofs from time to time that qualities that in poor men are often associated with a hard-working, humble career are well-pleasing in His sight. For what qualities on the part of the poor are so valuable, in a social point of view, as industry, self-denying diligence, systematic, unwearying devotion even to work which brings them scanty remuneration? By far the greater part of such men and women are called to work on, unnoticed and rewarded, and when their day is over to sink in an undistinguished grave. But from time to time some such persons rise to distinction. The class to which they belong is ennobled by their achievements. When God wished in the sixteenth century to achieve the great object of punishing the Church which had fallen into such miserable inefficiency and immorality, and wrenching half of Europe from its grasp, he found his principal agent in a poor miner's cottage in Saxony. When he desired to summon a sleeping Church to the great work of evangelising India, the man he called to the front was Carey, a poor cobbler of Northampton. When it was his purpose to present His Church with an unrivalled picture of the Christian pilgrimage, its dangers and trials, its joys, its sorrows, and its triumphs, the artist appointed to the task was John Bunyan, the tinker of Elstow. When the object was to provide a man that would open the great continent of Africa to civilisation and Christianity, and who needed, in order to do this, to face dangers and trials before which all ordinary men had shrunk, he found his agent in a poor spinner-boy, who was working twelve hours a day in a cotton mill on the banks of the Clyde. In all such matters, in humbling the rich and exalting the poor, God's object is not to punish the one because they are rich, or to exalt the other because they are poor. In the one case it is to punish vices bred from an improper use of wealth, and in the other to reward virtues that have sprung from the soil of poverty. "Poor and pious parents," wrote David Livingstone on the tombstone of his parents at Hamilton, when he wished to record the grounds of his thankfulness for the position in life which they held. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) **For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, He has set the world upon them.**—*The God of nature also the God of Providence and of grace*:—Verse 6 sets forth that God has absolute power over human life. He it is who makes pale with mortal disease the once ruddy cheek of health and beauty. He it is, again, who snatches a man from the jaws of death, when his recovery seems beyond all hope. The seventh verse and the first part of the eighth set forth God's absolute power over human circumstances. He it is who gives a fortune to one, and reduces another to beggary. He who brought Joseph out of the dungeon and made him ride in the second chariot which King Pharaoh had. All these are instances of God's power in Providence—in the management of human affairs. And now observe how Hannah passes on to speak of the power of God in Nature; "for," she adds, "the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them." The earth is spoken of as if it were a great temple or palace, held up by pillars like the house of Dagon—firm and settled, so long as those pillars remain unshaken, but sure to fall into ruin the moment the pillars are thrown down. Now we may take Hannah's expression in the same way, as a figurative one, meaning not that the earth does literally stand upon pillars, but that the mighty God, who created it, upholds it every instant by an act of His will; and that, if that act of will were for a moment withdrawn, it would drop at once into that nothingness, out of which it was drawn by creation. Hannah, then, according to this view of her meaning, adds to the instances she has given of God's power in Providence this wondrous instance of His power in Nature. Science since Hannah's time has taught us the way in which God does this—namely, by the law of gravitation, which, as the earth pursues its course in space, pulls it in every moment towards the sun; but assuredly the operation is not less wonderful, because we happen to have found out the principle on which it is conducted. And now observe the force of the *for* in the words—"for the pillars" (the sustaining, preserving power) "of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them." No wonder, she means to say, that God does such great things, brings about such strange vicissitudes in the life and fortunes of feeble men. For only see what tremendous irresistible forces He is always exerting in Nature. Now this gives rise to one or two edifying thoughts. The God of Providence, Hannah asserts, is the God of Nature also; and His ways in Nature, she implies, seem to us to be more amazing and stupendous than His ways in Providence. I say seem to us to be—*not* that in reality they are so. Why do God's works in Providence strike us with much less wonder than His works in Nature? I suppose because

we are comparatively so familiar with His works of Providence; life and death, health and sickness, the rise in one man's fortunes and the fall in another's, are around us on all sides; and, being matter of every day's experience, make slight impressions. Another reason is that we ourselves have some part in bringing about results in Providence; a man can bring himself to the gates of the grave by carelessness of his health, or may recover by the skill of the physician—may make a fortune by assiduous industry, or may lose one by neglect of his accounts and wasteful expenditure; but no man can arrest the sun in his course, or shake the earth to its foundations. The lesson is that we should try more and more to regard the God of Nature and of Providence as one, and to throw those notions of magnificence and power, which we derive from Nature, into other spheres of God's action—into the sphere of God's Providence and also of His Grace. Do I see design on every side of me in Nature, wise contrivance for the wellbeing of the creatures? Let me be assured that in human affairs also this same wise design is contriving and arranging all things, with a moral aim, for the exaltation of the humble, the humiliation of the proud, and the highest good to them that love God. (Dean Goulburn.)

Ver. 9. **He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.**—*The security of the saints and the ruin of the wicked*.—I. **THE SECURITY OF THE SAINTS** OF GOD. 1. The title, saints, although used by a profane world as a term of contempt, is of all names the most honourable. It literally signifies the Holy Ones. And must not that be indeed an honourable title which associates the servant of God with his Maker, "whose name is Holy?" with his Redeemer, "the Holy One of Israel?" and with "the Holy Ghost?"—not to mention those holy angels, who veil their faces before his throne. 2. The security of all such is here declared: "He will keep the feet of his saints." (1) It is a security from outward distress. Like the three children, they may enter the fiery furnace: but the Son of God will be with them in the fire. (2) It is a security from spiritual evil, which forms their greatest privilege. II. **THE CERTAIN RUIN OF THE WICKED.** They "shall be silent in darkness." 1. The persons here intended are manifestly all such as do not come under the former description of "saints." 2. Awful portion! "They shall be silent!" Here on earth, the wicked have a great deal to say for themselves, but in the world to come all their present high language will be mute as death. Moreover, they shall be silent "in darkness." And what is darkness? It is the absence of light—of comfort—of hope—of all possibility of deliverance. (J. Jowett, M.A.) *Heavenly preservation*.—Alpine guides often blindfold the traveller who seeks to ascend to those awful heights where dwell eternal frost and ice. When the danger is past the bandage is removed, and the traveller sees for the first time the slippery path along which he has been led. In like manner our Heavenly Father mercifully conceals the future, with its trials and dangers, till we are safely past. All that He hides is hidden in mercy; and all that He reveals is revealed in love. I would not know all, my Father. It is known to Thee, and that is enough. "We walk by faith, and not by sight." (C. Perren.) *The custody of God over His people*.—1. **THE STATE AND CONDITION OF THE PERSONS** consisting of two branches. "He will keep the feet of His saints." And first of all to consider it in spirituals, ye shall see God's custody of His people in protecting them from those sins and temptations, and snares which they are subject unto. (Psal. 121, 7.) (2 Tim. 4, 18.) (Ps. 37, 23.) For the opening of this a little unto us we may take it in these explications. First, by the prevention of evil and sinful occasion, God keeps the feet of His people. Secondly, as by preventing of the occasions of sin, so by fortifying and strengthening the heart and mind against closing with them. (Luke 22, 32.) (2 Cor. 12, 9.) There are four graces amongst the rest, which are especially conducing hereunto. First of all, the grace of fear, and spiritual watchfulness. Blessed is the man that feareth always. Secondly, the grace of faith, that's another supporter likewise. Faith lays hold upon all the promises of assistance, and strengthening. (1 Peter, 1, 5.) Thirdly, God keeps the feet of His saints from progress and proceedings in sin, when they fall. Thus (Ps. 94, 18.) Lastly, He keeps the feet of His saints from relapse, and returning to sin again. Now to make this point pertinent indeed to ourselves, we must have a care of two things. The first is the qualification of our persons. Observe here whose feet it is that He here keeps. They must be saints whose feet God will keep. Saints, and His saints too, saints of His making,

and saints of His calling, and saints of His owning. Secondly, it is not enough for us to be right for our persons in the general qualifications of them; but we must be right likewise for our carriage and the behaviour of ourselves. Those which are the saints of God may sometimes by their own wilful heedlessness provoke God for a time at least to suspend this safeguard of them. But so much of the first reference of these words, as they may be taken spiritually, and in relation to the inward man. Now further, secondly, we may likewise take them in reference to temporals, and God's Providence as to the things of this life. First, He will bless them in their ways. Take notice of that. This is one way to keep their feet. (Ps. 121, 8.) Again, further, He names the feet, as those which are most exposed to danger, and hurt of all other. Secondly, in regard of their works, whatsoever they do. This is said of a godly man. (Ps. 1, ver. 3.) (Gen. 39, 3.) II. The second is **THE STATE OF THE WICKED IN THESE**. But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. As there's a difference betwixt the wicked and the godly in regard of their disposition, so is there likewise in regard of their condition. First, a state of darkness. First, for this life present as the way. Wicked men they are here in darkness. First, in the ignorance of their minds. (Eph. 4, 18.) Secondly, in the inordinancy of their affections, there's darkness in them from thence also. (1 John 2, 11.) Malice shades the mind, and so any other unruly passion in them. Thirdly, in the practice of all other sins whatsoever, besides works of wickedness, are works of darkness, and so they are still called. The unfruitful works of darkness. (Eph. 5, 11.) Lastly, in that spiritual blindness which they are given up to. The second is the darkness of the end. That darkness which they are subject unto in another world. This is of two sorts, either the darkness of death, or judgment. The second is the state of silence, in order to this darkness. "They shall be silent in darkness." First, that grief, and horror, and perplexity of mind, which shall seize upon them in this condition. Silence is an attendant upon grief and atonement in the extremities of it. Secondly, silence is a note of conviction. They shall be silent, that is, they shall have nothing to say for themselves. Wicked men, as they shall be full of grief, so likewise of confusion. Thirdly, it is a note of abode and of continuance in this miserable condition. They shall be kept and bound up in it. Now (to join them both together) they are such as do very fitly agree to such kind of persons. Both darkness and also silence in it are very suitable to wicked men. First, the darkness of condition answerable to the darkness of sin. Wicked men they abhor the light, because their deeds are evil. Secondly, silence in evil, answerable to silence from good: Wicked men they care not to speak anything which may be to the honour of God. We begin with the first, viz., as it refers to the first clause. "He shall keep the feet of His saints," that is, by taking it exclusively, He and He alone. We'll reduce it briefly to three heads. First, the strength of body and human power with the appurtenances thereof. Secondly, the strength of parts and the improvements of wit and understanding, the strength of grace in the mere purpose of it. Therefore, let none trust to this, whosoever they be. Secondly, not by strength against Him, in reference especially to the second clause. The wicked shall be silent in darkness. Ungodly men shall not escape punishment, because they cannot be too strong for God, who is a God of power and might. First, to thankfulness and acknowledgment of the great mercy and goodness of God to us in this particular. Secondly, as to matter of faith, we are to improve it to that likewise, having had experience of God's goodness hitherto, to be ready to expect as much from Him for time to come. Thirdly, and specially, to fruitfulness and obedience. God having done so great things for us, we should endeavour to do somewhat for him. Now further, secondly, for the wicked's silence in darkness, in the disappointment of his enemies, we may observe the parallel in this also. Here was both darkness and silence in darkness. Darkness there was in the very letter. It was a work in the dark. And that both as to place, and time, in which it was wrought. (T. Horton, D.D.) *The conduct of the Lord towards saints and sinners*.—I. **THE LORD WILL KEEP THE FEET OF HIS SAINTS**. 1. The word saint signifies a holy one. 2. Saints are on a journey through this world of sin and sorrow to a better country. (Heb. xi. 14-16.) 3. The Lord Himself keeps their feet. He guides and directs them by His counsel. (Ps. lxxiii. 24.) II. **THE WICKED SHALL BE SILENT IN DARKNESS**. 1. The wicked are without God in the world. (Eph. ii. 12.) 2. These are noisy and clamorous, boasting of themselves, and prone to speak evil of God and religion; but the time is at hand when they shall be put to silence. (Psa. xxxi. 17.) 3. Darkness shall encompass them

about on every side. They are sometimes brought into darkness in the present world, by the judgments of God. (Isa. viii. 22.) III. FOR BY STRENGTH NO MAN SHALL PREVAIL. Wicked men fight against God and truth, but they cannot prevail. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 12-17. **Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial.**—*Indulgent home life*:—I. THE SINS IT INDUCES. The sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are the more prominent, so we will contemplate, 1. Their conduct and character. They appear in an official capacity; but the official must be viewed in its association with the personal. A degenerate priest is but the natural outgrowth of the degenerate man. The evil is in the moral constitution of these men, and whatever they do, wherever they go, it will appear. (1) They were audacious. (Ver. 12.) The children of Satan, and yet in the temple of God. They knew not the Lord. There are certain qualifications needful to the right discharge of every occupation, and he is a bold man who will undertake the duty without the fitness. What verdict would society pass upon any one who should pursue the career of a doctor, without having studied the principles of anatomy, ignorant of the laws of medicine? Death to the patient would in all probability be the result. Much more criminal he who will engage to remedy the malady of the immortal soul when ignorant of its antidote. "They knew not the Lord." They were in the very place surrounded by indications of the Divine—how wilful their ignorance! The history of their religious life was embodied in the ark; they could not look upon its ancient timbers without seeing in every board the mercy and providence of God. But their hearts were out of sympathy with these holy associations, and instead of stimulating to devotion, habitual contact with such sanctities led to criminal familiarity. When it is said that they knew not the Lord, it cannot mean that they doubted the reality of His existence. Faint gleams of His essential life had shone upon their intellects. Though in the sunlight, they saw not the beauties it revealed. Probably when at first they entered upon the Temple duties it was with feeble steps—the pallor of a revealed dread would blanch their cheeks; but now fear had lost its tremor in the cool hardihood of habitual sin. What a degree of defiance does their conduct disclose! (2.) They were covetous. (Vers. 13, 14.) What a contradiction is an avaricious priesthood! how strangely out of harmony with the royal beneficence of its Institutor, and the noble munificence of its intended exercise. A devoted ministry looks more to the Divine remuneration than to the human, and does not strike its "fish-hook" into the "caldron" of the worshipper. So instead of stimulating the religious sentiments of penitent souls, and lifting them to God, they perverted the design of their office by making themselves the object of its toil. "The priest took for himself." Such a class of men have almost unlimited scope for the exercise of their purpose. The strongest instincts of the soul are those which pertain to God and His worship. Hence when claims are presented to the mentally weak and morally credulous, such demands have but to be uttered to be obeyed. How mean thus to make religion a means of personal gain! (3.) They were despotic. (Ver. 16.) Coercion is operating without its sphere when brought to bear on matters of religion. Spiritual life and devotion are essentially free, both as regards the principle of its action and the form of its homage. "I will take it by force" of these wicked priests. A religion that cannot establish its claim by motive must be weak. Force is always the weapon of the morally imbecile. (4.) They were adulterous. (Ver. 22.) (5.) They brought contempt upon religion. (Ver. 17.) Men failed to make a distinction between the priests and the religion whose interests they were pretending to serve. Nature is inherently beautiful, but if viewed through a piece of stained glass its perfection would be marred by an unnatural tint. So if we desire to behold the loveliness of piety we must not regard it as presented through any coloured media, but by direct contact and inspection. Religion to be correctly estimated must be felt; it is not a thing for the eye to admire, but for the heart to appreciate. Still, ungodly men have their ideals of rectitude, often sharply defined, and such, seeing the sacrilege of the priests, "abhorred the offering of the Lord." (2.) The conduct and character of Eli. As a parent he was over-indulgent (Chap. xiii. 13). This statement is demonstrated even by his rebukes. Eli was "very old," and the slightest vexation would be harassing to his feeble energies, but especially when occasioned by the ill conduct of his sons. What a sad reality!—the father old in years, the sons old in sin! What a reflection upon his discipline and example! (1.) The method of Eli's reproof. He

reproves them (1.) Collectively—"Ye." Should not each have been taken to the private chamber, that correction might have been adapted to disposition and age. The reproof was, therefore, indiscriminate. He reproves (2.) By interrogation (Ver. 23); (3.) By assertion (Ver. 24); (4.) By argument (Ver. 25). (2.) The Effect of his reproof. "They hearkened not." Eli would be reminded that correction had come too late; though the plastic nature of childhood might have yielded to his touch, he had now to deal with sterner material. God's controversy with an indulgent parent (Ver. 27). Eli is held responsible for the sins of his family. "Unto Eli." He is charged with (1.) Ingratitude (Ver. 28); (2.) With insult (Ver. 29). II. THE SORROWS IT ENTAILS. 1. God revokes the mandate of Eli's election, and asserts the universal principle of his action (Ver. 30). Eli's election was not unalterable, or irrespective of personal conduct. A motto for the warehouse, "Them that honour Me I will honour." The punishment predicted. This was the cloud before the storm. (1.) It was humiliating (Ver. 31). The once priestly family is to be divested of all authority or power. "I will cut off thine arm." (2.) It was irreparable (Ver. 32). (3.) It was eternal. A new line of priests was to be established which should be "for ever." How the prophetic becomes historical! It is a page of war which issues in (1.) National defeat (Chap. iv. 10); (2.) Social consternation—"All the city cried out." (3.) Spiritual declension (Ver. 22). (4.) Family extinction (Vers. 17—20). While Eli sat on the gate, above it sat the Eternal God. So one evil family contained the germ of the nation's overthrow.

LESSONS: (1.) Parental discipline should be firm as kind. (2.) The welfare of the nation and church depend upon family training. (3.) A respect of God the truest way to promotion. (4.) The sorrowful termination of even a good man's life. (5.) The awful extinction of an impious priesthood. (*J. S. Ezell, M.A.*)

Eli's house:—The notices of little Samuel, that alternate in this passage with the sad accounts of Eli and his house, are like the green spots that vary the dull stretches of sand in a desert; or like the little bits of blue sky that charm your eye when the firmament is darkened by a storm. We see evil powerful and most destructive; we see the instrument of healing very feeble—a mere infant. Yet the power of God is with the infant, and in due time the force which he represents will prevail. It is just a picture of the grand conflict of sin and grace in the world. It was verified emphatically when Jesus was a child. It is to be noticed that Eli was a descendant, not of Eleazar, the elder son of Aaron, but of Ithamar, the younger. Why the high priesthood was transferred from the one family to the other, in the person of Eli, we do not know. Evidently Eli's claim to the priesthood was a valid one, for in the reproof addressed to him it is fully assumed that he was the proper occupant of the office. From Eli's administration great things would seem to have been expected; all the more lamentable and shameful was the state of things that ensued. 1. First our attention is turned to the gross wickedness and scandalous behaviour of Eli's sons. Hophni and Phinehas take their places in that unhonoured band where the names of Alexander Borgia, and many a high ecclesiastic of the Middle Ages send forth their stinking savour. They are marked by the two prevailing vices of the lowest natures—greed and lechery. It is difficult to say whether the greater hurt was inflicted by such conduct on the cause of religion or on the cause of ordinary morality. As for the cause of religion, it suffered that terrible blow which it always suffers whenever it is dissociated from morality. The very heart and soul is torn out of religion when men are led to believe that their duty consists in merely believing certain dogmas, attending to outward observances, paying dues, and "performing" worship. What kind of conception of God can men have who are encouraged to believe that justice, mercy, and truth have nothing to do with His service? 2. It is often very difficult to explain how it comes to pass that godly men have had ungodly children. There is little difficulty in accounting for this on the present occasion. There was a fatal defect in the method of Eli. His remonstrance with his sons is not made at the proper time. It is not made in the fitting tone. When disregarded, it is not followed up by the proper consequences. We must not forget that, however inexcusable their father was, the great guilt of the proceeding was theirs. How must they have hardened their hearts against the example of Eli, against the solemn claims of God, against the holy traditions of the service, against the interests and claims of those whom they ruined, against the welfare of God's chosen people! Could anything come nearer to the sin against the Holy Ghost? No wonder

though their doom was that of persons judicially blinded and hardened. They were given up to a reprobate mind, to do those things that were not convenient. 8. But it is time we should look at the message brought to Eli by the man of God. The house of Eli would suffer a terrible degradation. He (this includes his successors in office) would be stript of "his arm," that is, his strength. No member of his house would reach a good old age. One word respecting that great principle of the Kingdom of God announced by the prophet as that on which Jehovah would act in reference to His priests—"Them that honour Me I will honour, but they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." It is one of the grandest sayings in Scripture. It is the eternal rule of the Kingdom of God, not limited to the days of Hophni and Phinehas, but, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, eternal as the ordinances of heaven. However men may try to get their destiny into their own hands; however they may secure themselves from this trouble and from that; however, like the first Napoleon, they may seem to become omnipotent, and to wield an irresistible power, yet the day of retribution comes at last; having sown to the flesh, of the flesh also they reap corruption. What a grand rule of life it is, for old and young. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *The sons of Eli*:—Eli was high-priest of the Jews when the ark of the Lord was in Shiloh. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the Lord. Their office was holy, but their character was corrupt. They touched sacred things with unworthy hands. The incident shows but too plainly the vital difference between the spiritual and the official. Hophni and Phinehas were officially among the highest men of their day. They bore a holy name, they pronounced holy words, they were clothed in emblematic robes. Yet Hophni and Phinehas were men of Belial. The outside was beautiful; the inside was full of corruption and death. Is there not a lesson here to teachers of Christian truth? It is possible for a man to have a pulpit, and to have no God; to have a Bible, and no Holy Ghost; to be employing his lips in uttering the eloquence of truth, when his heart has gone astray from all that is true and beautiful and good. Is there not a lesson here to professors of Christ? We bear the holy name, and men have a right to expect the holy deed. We need instruction upon the great question of spiritual discipline. When a man who professes to know Christ is found drunk in the streets, we expel him from the Church, and call that discipline; when a man is convicted of some heinous crime, we cut him off from the fellowship of the Church, and call that the discipline of Christian fellowship. It is nothing of the kind; that is mere decency. There is not a club in the world that cares one iota for its own respectability that would not do the same thing. Ours is to be Christian discipline. Yet even here is a mystery—a strange and wondrous thing. Hophni and Phinehas, officially great and spiritually corrupt; minister after minister falling, defiling his garments, and debasing his name; professor after professor pronouncing the right word with the lips, but never realising it in the life. Such is the history of the Church. In the face of all this, God still employs man to reveal the truth to other men, to enforce his claims upon their attention. Instead of in a moment of righteous anger sweeping the Church floor, so that not a footstep of man might remain upon it, and then calling the world around him, and speaking personally face to face—he still employs men to teach men, to "allure to brighter worlds and lead the way." The incident shows the deadly result of corruption in influential quarters. All quarters, indeed, are influential; yet some are known to be more influential than others, therefore we adopt this form of expression. The priests were sons of Belial. What was the consequence? The people abhorred the offering of the Lord. The minister is a bad man. What is the consequence? His character is felt through all the congregation. We should remember three things in connection with this advice. 1. The natural tendency of men to religious laxity and indifference. 2. The effect of insincerity upon doctrine. Sincerity is itself an argument. Is it possible to speak the truth with a liar's heart? If his lips pronounce the truth, if his heart contradict it, and his life blaspheme it, what wonder if men—who have a natural tendency towards religious indifference—should believe the life and deny the teaching! 3. The peculiarity of moral teaching in requiring personal illustration. Men cannot understand merely theoretic morals; they must have them personified; they must have them taught by incarnation, and illustrated in daily life. The artist may teach you to paint a beautiful picture; yet he may have no regard for moral truth. His non-regard for moral truth may not interfere, so far as you can see, with his ability and earnestness as a mere artist. It is

not so in the Church of God. A man's character is his eloquence; a man's spiritual reality is the argument that wins in the long run. The lesson is to Churches. What are we in our corporate capacity? Are we holy? If not we are helping to debase and ruin the world; we have taken God's leverage to help to undo God's work! The terribleness of a moral leader falling! On the other hand, we cannot admit the plea that bad leaders are excuse enough for bad followers, when that plea is urged in relation to Christian teaching and life. Nor can we allow that exceptional inconsistency should vitiate the whole Church. We go into an orchard and point to one bit of blemished fruit, and say, "Because there is a blemish upon that piece of fruit the whole orchard is decayed and corrupt." Who would believe it? There can be found a light coin in every currency in civilisation. Suppose we took up a standard coin under weight and said, "Because this is not of the standard weight, your whole currency is defective, and, as a nation of financiers, you are not worthy of trust." Who would believe it? Such a theory is instantly destroyed by the fact that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. We do not say, "Look at Christians." We say, "Look at Christ." Then, such a theory is never urged but by men who are in search of excuses for their own corruptness. We are not to be followers of Hophni and Phinehas. The priest is not God; the minister is not Jesus Christ; the professor is not the Redeemer of the world. We must, therefore, insist upon the honest investigation of great principles on the one hand, and specially insist upon the calm, severe scrutiny and study of our Saviour's own personal life and ministry. We have a written revelation. To that revelation our appeal must be made; to the law and to the testimony must be our challenge. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The sons of Eli*:—We may justly regard this as affording the motto for a very instructive and mournful history, left to give warning of the weakness into which even good men are apt to fall, and of the manner in which a righteous God often punishes the failure of His servants in duty, through the consequences arising out of their own neglect. It is not, accordingly, said, nor is it to be supposed that Eli's weakness, however blameable, furnished excuse for the wickedness of his children. **I. THE AGGRAVATED GUILT WITH WHICH ELI'S SONS WERE CHARGEABLE.** Hophni and Phinehas are, in this portion of sacred history, marked out as examples of what is vicious and depraved. Not contented with committing wickedness in secret, they had reached a state of regardlessness, sinning against the Lord publicly, and with a high hand. Nor was it a time in the history of Israel when the conscience of the people was peculiarly alive. The fervour of grateful feeling for the past kindness of God had passed away; there seemed instead to be prevailing forgetfulness of the great purpose, for the advancement of which they had been so favoured, namely, the keeping alive of God's worship amidst surrounding ignorance and idolatry. Both the civil and religious polity of the nation were in a state of disorder. In Eli's person the two highest offices then existing in the state were united—for the long space of forty years he occupied over Israel the position, not of judge alone, but of high priest also. But defective as Eli's conduct towards his family appears to have been—many as were the temptations to which they were exposed, the guilt of Hophni and Phinehas was marked by peculiar aggravation; they had misused great advantages. To know the truth and yet to reject it; to be told of God's claims on our obedience, and to refuse compliance with them, is to begin in youth a course which often leads to a rebellious and profligate manhood, conducting, perhaps, to a premature grave, or prolonged to an unhonoured and miserable age. Such appears to have been the case with Eli's sons. They had abused great advantages, and incurred no small measure of responsibility. They were not ignorant of Jehovah's claims, nor of the holiness of heart and life which He required; their guilt accordingly was conspicuous and undeniable. The lives of Eli's sons, who were so near to the altar, might have been dedicated to Heaven. The "sons of Eli were sons of Belial:" had reached a frightful ripeness in depravity and maturity in crime. They seemed to have lost sight of the distinction between good and evil, to have forgotten the existence of a God, who "judgeth righteously." That wickedness was indeed great. There is applied to them in the text such a title as indicates no ordinary proficiency in what was offensive to God, and opposed to His law. They are called "sons of Belial," as though distinguished on account of the spirit of evil which they manifested. But can we suppose that depravity to have been at once attained? On the contrary, may they not have trembled with the

fear and struggled with the reluctance of the less experienced transgressor? II. We proceed to notice THE INEFFECTUAL REPROOF OF HIS SONS ON THE PART OF ELI, AND THE PUNISHMENT WITH WHICH THEIR WICKEDNESS WAS FOLLOWED. At this stage of the history mention is first made of Eli as having reproved the shameful conduct of his sons. He was old; his faculties may have failed, and his perception have been dulled, yet surely he could not have been altogether unaware of what was going on. Instead of using his official power to put a stop to their enormities, his duty both as a father and a legislator—instead of the severity of censure and reprimand that were called for, all that Eli said was quite disproportioned to what was demanded by the exigencies of the case. They were his sons, but dear as they had been, if reprimand were fruitless, should they not have been removed, considering the sacred office they held, from the possibility of further transgressing? In this respect also Eli failed, adding to past neglect what was in effect equivalent to a betrayal of that cause to which, with all his faults and failings, he was strongly attached. III. Let us now ATTEMPT TO DRAW FROM THE TEXT ONE OR TWO PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. We have here a lesson for parents and others, having a sphere of authority and influence. The service of the Lord is still that from which the corrupt heart recoils with unwillingness. How often has the tyranny of evil habit been suffered, as in the case of Eli's household, to become confirmed, without adequate attempt to check its growth. How frequently is the period allowed to pass, during which a "good foundation" might have been laid, in habits of piety and the fear of God. 2. We have also here a more general lesson of warning to such as persevere in conduct denounced by Scripture, alike by positive precepts, and by means of warning examples. (*A. Bonar.*) *Vile priests and the pure child*:—The change in Samuel's daily life and circumstances, when his mother left him behind in Shiloh, must have been like that which many a boy is brought to when he first leaves the shelter of home, and begins to find his way in new associations, among new faces, without the old supports and protection. Samuel, however, was too young when his mother first left him to become much stained by the sin that was round him in Shiloh, for the iniquity was too vile, too mature, too gross for him at that early age to know its real meaning and horror; but the danger of infection, of his very life-blood, his inmost soul being poisoned and all his future life defiled, was, if we look with only human expectation, most imminent and sad. Between the tabernacle of the Lord at Shiloh and his father's house at Ramah, there was a difference great and bad enough to blight any life. In place of Elkanah there was Eli; in place of his mother's pure faith and tender love there were the sons of Eli and the women who came to the tabernacle; instead of home sanctity there was the misery of priestly, official religion, together with the almost inevitable degradation of holiest things. The Lord keeps the feet of His saints when they are surrounded with vile dangers and sad spiritual perils. I can easily understand how Luther, in his dark days of conflict and battle for truth and purity and Christ against apostasy and formalism and a priesthood as dark and vile as that of the two sons of Eli, should often turn to those early chapters of the first book of Samuel, and should rise strengthened for the Lord and the struggle against spiritual wickedness in high places and impure error. I. SAMUEL WAS ENDANGERED BY PRIESTLY PROFANATION OF DIVINE ORDINANCES. Just as some of the sweetest flowers smell the foulest when dead, so it was found that these men and their sacred office became rank and foul, defiling all that came to the sanctuary, and depraving even the most sacred things of the Most High. The priesthood, the sacrifices, the holy seasons, the holy places, the bright feasts that God had appointed, they turned to their own vile uses. Those things and offices of religion that Samuel had been taught to regard as most sacred he must have found, if old enough to think at all, systematically outraged and violated; and religion, sooner or later, would be thought by him to be an imposition and its services deceptive. Not that for him or for any young mind to reason or think so would have been or would now be wise; but it would have been human, natural, and not to be wondered at. For it ever has been a common error of young lives to confound principles with persons. Sometimes I have heard the evil lives of the children of pious parents, or of ministers of the Gospel, accounted for by the grim comment—"they are behind the scenes of church life," and of Christian life. But there ought to be no seeing behind the scenes. If truly in Christ, ye are children of the light and of the day, and ought to walk in the light, as He is in the light. Here it may be well to distinctly recognise the

greater danger there is of the profanation of holy things and sacred duties where there is a ceremonial system than where there is a steady and consistent recognition of the belief that the religion which is most acceptable to God and most consistent with the mind of Christ is that which is least ceremonial, least ritual, least priestly; which, having the smallest possible sanctity in institutions and days and offices, must, if it would be consistent and worthy the name of a religion, insist to the very utmost on the greatest possible purity and holiness in hearts and souls. II. ANOTHER OF SAMUEL'S DANGERS WAS FROM PRIESTLY SENSUALITY. In thus arranging the risks of Samuel at Shiloh I wish to keep in our minds the perils that souls as dear to us as Hannah's child was to her may and do have to encounter when they leave the immediate protection of home. I would not say any more on this part of the subject if it were not for the great, the gross dangers that even children's lives now meet in the impurities of the streets, the vile sensuousness, bordering on sensuality and licentiousness, of much popular literature, and, with some, in the daily pollution in business places and elsewhere of those who already carry the plague spot about with them, and, like the plague-maddened wretches of old, delight in staining and contaminating others. It is such pernicious associations, such horrid perils, that so frequently lead to the deepest profanation of parts of our life that should be regarded as the most sacred and dealt with most purely. It is such infection that in many cases utterly destroys the influence of a mother's parting counsels, or a father's almost divine commands. III. ANOTHER DANGER OF SAMUEL ROSE FROM THE PRIESTLY RAPACITY OF THE SONS OF ELI. There have been covetous, worldly, rapacious ministers of religion in all ages, but there never have been so many as when and where a priestly system has gone its own way and developed its own life. Earthly greed and rapacity press as closely on the attention of the young in modern business and social life, as did Samuel's life on him. The judgment of most things and men by a money standard; the public unscrupulousness of so many as to the ways and means they adopt so long as the end of gain is reached; the social customs that increasingly make money the principal thing; the prodigious wealth of our times, and the infatuated efforts of the rich to become richer, to add house to house and field to field;—all these things produce an atmosphere, if I may so say, that is charged with danger. No man's vileness will warrant you falling away from the truth. No hypocrite's sin, no minister's unworthiness, will acquit any young life of guilt in backsliding from the hope and promise of early, pious days. It will now, perhaps, help us to see how Samuel lived in the midst of the sins of Shiloh. 1. And we know, first of all—That Samuel lived uncontaminated by the profanity, the covetousness, and the lust that were so near him. Now learn from this history, that there is no necessity to sin put on anyone anywhere. You cannot help running the risk, but having allowed this much, all has been allowed. If you have sinned it is because you have been careless or wilful, and not because you could not help sinning. Egypt, Shiloh, and Babylon put greater pressure on the young heroes who there fought for the Lord than we have to bear; yet they did not sin. Neither need we. 2. Again: We are told that Samuel grew in Divine grace and human favour with such vile surroundings. God gives this to you that are tempted as a hope and a promise to check our laments over unfortunate circumstances and temptations. You may grow in grace anywhere, just as you may sin anywhere. You may grow in grace on the borders of the pit; and you may sink into the pit from the house of God. Samuel grew in grace: what shall we do? 3. Moreover, Samuel grew thus by grace that we may have. The strongest of us will live as helplessly as a child that cannot yet walk, if we go forth in our own strength, and will utterly fail; while the weakest of us and those of us whose lot in life is full of spiritual hazard and care may have all the more the full and strong confidence that the Lord will keep the feet of His saints and will strengthen us with every kind of might, while the wicked shall soon be silent in darkness. (*G. B. Ryley.*) *Degradation at the altar*:—As garments to a body, so are ceremonies to religion. Garments on a living body preserve the natural warmth; put them on a dead body and they will never fetch life. Ceremonies help to increase devotion; but in a dead heart they cannot breed it. These garments of religion upon a holy man are like Christ's garments on his own holy body; but joined with a profane heart, they are like Christ's garments on his crucifying murderers. (*Ralph Brownrig.*) *Sons of Eli, Sons of Belial*:—That would seem to be impossible. Eli was a holy man; Eli was a priest. Eli was

not intellectually a strong man, but morally he was righteous and faithful up to a very high degree. He was not much of a ruler at home; still he was substantially a good man. Belial represents corruption, darkness, the devil, the unholy genius of the universe; anything that indicates selfishness, baseness, or corruption of character. Now read the text:—The sons of Eli the holy priest were sons of Belial the bad spirit, the evil genius. We are always coming upon these conflicts, ironies, impossibilities. At the same time there is the fact, solemn, tragical, tremendous, that the sons of a good man may be bad men, and that good men themselves may be surprised or insidiously led into the deepest, gravest evils. Unless we live and move and have our being in God we cannot realise all our privileges and turn them into solid and beneficent character. There may be something in physical descent, and there ought to be in spiritual descent. Eli ought not to have had bad sons. Bad people ought never to come out of good homes. The danger is that Eli himself may be charged with the responsibility. It is so difficult for an ill-judging and prejudiced human nature to distinguish between cause and effect. Do not suppose that you will be a good man because your father was a good man, and your mother a good woman. You may upset the whole process of heredity; you may create a point of departure in your own development. It lies within the power, but not within the right, of every man to say, From the date of my birth there shall be black blood in our family; I will live the downward life, I will make hospitality in the house of evil spirits. So easy is it to destroy, so tempting is it to make bad fame. We see this not only religiously, in the distinctive sense of that term, but we see this inversion and perversion of heredity along all the lines of life and within all the spheres of human experience. A civilised man, a son of civilisation, may be the most barbarous man upon the face of the earth. It does not lie within the power of a savage to be so barbarous as a civilised man can be. The sons of Eli were sons of Belial. The corresponding sentence in the lower levels of history is, the sons of civilisation are sons of barbarism. So we might proceed to further illustration and say, The sons of education are sons of the greatest ignorance. Who can be so ignorant as a well-informed man when he has given himself up to the service of evil? It is not ignorance of the base and vulgar type that can be excused on the ground of want of privilege and want of opportunity, but it is that peculiar ignorance which knowing the light hides it, which knowing the right does the wrong. His education is an element in his condemnation. Sometimes we can say the sons of refinement are sons of vulgarity. The whole point is this: that our heredity may be broken in upon, our ancestral privileges may be thrown away,—sons of Eli may be sons of Belial. We hold nothing moral by right of ancestry. Every man should hold his property by right of labour, by right of honest moral conquest. Whatever you have, young man, take it at the spear-point. You cannot hand a good character to others. You can set up a good reputation for goodness, and that ought to be a suggestion and a stimulus and a direction and a comfort, but you cannot hand on your character as you hand on your acres and your pounds sterling. Every man has to conquer the alphabet as if no other man had ever conquered it before. Why not amplify that idea and carry it throughout the whole scheme of character, and see how we are called upon to work for what we have, and not to depend upon ancestral blessings and privileges. Do not then say, My father was good, my mother was good, therefore I need not take any interest in these matters myself: part of their virtue is laid up for me, I may draw upon it by-and-bye. All that reasoning is vicious, false, and spiritually destructive. A double damnation is theirs who had great advantages to begin with and who did not rise to the nobleness and greatness of their opportunities. What some men had to begin with! how much! They had such roomy homes, such libraries, such kindness and love on the part of parents and friends; they were born to all manner of social advantages so-called. Where are they to-day? What have they done? Did they not begin with too much? Were they not overburdened? Possibly some of you may have begun too well. You are not altogether to be blamed for having fallen as you have done. I have applicants for bounty now from men whose fathers were worth a hundred thousand pounds. These are men who have wasted a whole inheritance of ancestral repute for wisdom and goodness. Yet I cannot altogether blame them; the parental Eli cannot altogether wholly escape responsibility. They had too much, things came too easily; "Easy come, easy go," is the motto which experience has tested and endorsed. With

how little have some other men begun, and yet look at them to-day. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Corrupt lives contagious*:—Men of corrupt lives at the head of religion, who are shameless in their profligacy, have a lowering effect on the moral life of the whole community. Down and down goes the standard of living. Class after class gets infected. The mischief spreads like dry rot in a building; ere long the whole fabric of society is infected with the poison. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

They knew not the Lord.—*Sinful and childlike ignorance of God* (compare with Chap iii. ver. 7):—Hophni and Phinehas did not know the Lord; their lives showed it. Samuel did not know the Lord, and his actions showed it also. But as between the illustrative acts, so also between the meaning of the words in the two cases, there is as wide a difference as it is possible to conceive. It will help us if we here remember how wide a ground in Scripture this expression "to know" or "not to know the Lord" covers. The first form is at times a synonym for salvation, for the whole course of perfect redemption and complete sanctification. The second, the negative form, is one of the intensest expressions that Scripture uses to state the condition of a sinful soul, and for showing the origin of some of the darkest enormities that have ever degraded the name of religion. The New Testament puts this before us very definitely. When Christ would express His perfect union and intercourse with the Father even on earth, He said, "I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true; whom ye know not, but I know Him." "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me." John accounts for worldly antagonism to the saints of old in this way—"The world knoweth us not because it knew Him not." I. THAT

THE EXPRESSION "NOT KNOWING THE LORD" MAY IMPLY AND ACCOUNT FOR EVERY KIND AND DEGREE OF SIN. This is sinful ignorance of God. In the case now before us, it explains some of the most degrading transgressions of which man can be guilty. 1. But this sinful ignorance of God may co-exist with full knowledge of the truth of God—that is, intellectual knowledge, received by means of education, by example of others, by home training, by social custom or general habit. You may see this in the example of the two young priests. It is certain that they knew the law of the Lord which is perfect. They knew the truth of God, the ways of the Lord, the expectation and hopes of the Almighty that were associated with their priesthood and the offering of sacrifice. They knew the truth, but they knew not God. Their hearts and His were at enmity. Let us make the same distinction for ourselves, between knowing the truth of God and knowing the Lord; between knowing what God has said and knowing God Himself. Is it not one of the saddest facts that some of the worst lives are those that like Hophni and Phinehas know the way of the Lord, have had holy training and gentle nurture, many associations with God's house, much hearing the Word, and still show that they know not God? Not the knowledge of truth or forms of truth, not correct beliefs or anything of such kind can be depended on to put us right with our God. 2. Notice, again, that there is an ignorance of God that is sinful in its consequences, but is at the same time not guilty. We can understand the vast transgressions of great cities, the brutal tendencies of so large a mass of the population by remembering their inheritance of gross ignorance and animalism in body and mind, their entailed heritage of utter ignorance of God, of inability almost to realise or even to recognise a God and Father of love, or see any meaning in the cross whereon their sins were borne. Is not some of the responsibility resting with Christians, on whose part there has been neglect of extending the light of the glory of God. 3. We must further note that there are cases in which ignorance of the Lord is in itself a greater transgression than the worst sins that it may beget or account for. These two priests were as evil in some things as men could be. But more shameful than their deepest impiety was that which was the cause of it—even their wilful ignorance of God. There is practically no restraint left that can touch the heart. To know God is to have now the root of eternal life within us; not to know God is to have the seed of eternal death growing in us now, and in the world to come to be altogether defiled. II. NOT KNOWING THE LORD MAY COMPRISE AND ACCOUNT FOR EVERY DEGREE OF IMMATUREITY IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. There is a sinful ignorance, as we have seen; and now we have the ignorance of immaturity, of the childlike state. Of this state Samuel the child is the illustration. Samuel had had the preparatory training of his mother's love, the reverent guiding of his life along the way that literally leads to God; but

still the moment of intelligent revelation of God to him had not yet come. His love to the Lord had grown like a little seedling plant; now it was to be transplanted into fuller soil, freer air—to have more root room, more life room altogether. Stronger and more vigorous and bracing winds were to breathe their blessing upon it; hotter sunshine was to stimulate it; elements more maturing were to lie about the roots. Soon the day of revelation, the night of the opening of heaven in solemnity to his young soul, came; but in prospect of that visitation by which his life was fixed for ever, Samuel did not know the Lord. He rested till then as in the arms of God; he lived on God as once he had hung upon his mother's breast—not knowing the love that held him though he lived in it and by it; not seeing clearly the face that bowed over him in unspeakable affection, though his own features bore the same lines and carried the same marks. He did not yet know; but this was the ignorance of imperfect growth, of incomplete development. To some there may be a special need of considering this aspect of Samuel's life, and a particular advantage in noting its obvious meaning. For this certainly means that there may be life in God before there is intelligent recognition of it. The father sees his image in the child before the little one recognises it. The Lord was in our life, and we knew it not; nor did we know Him till He Himself drew aside the veil. Or, as it seemed at times, we rambled, as a child might in the tabernacle, into that which is within the veil, into the very Holy of Holies, and there, instead of mighty glory and awful power, we found One gentler than any of earth, a voice speaking more softly than a loving woman, saying, "My son, give Me thy heart!" and, as to presences, we could not see in the Holy Place, "This is My beloved Son." We knew not God, but he knew us as His. "I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me. I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." It may be that we are all involved, to some extent, in blame, for we have not attained that knowledge which depends on earnest seeking after God. God will not teach the souls that will not wait on Him. God cannot show His beauty to eyes that are turned away from Him. He can reveal His secret only to those that fear Him. If we give up life's strength, and all the power of our days, to one or to many inferior earthly things, giving to the Lord none of our strength, how can we expect the Lord's light and knowledge, with the consequent blessing of our advance in holiness, to be ours? (*G. B. Ryley.*)

Vers. 18, 19. **But Samuel ministered before the Lord.**—*Early piety*:—**I. THE MOTHER'S DEVOTION.** **II. SAMUEL'S EARLY PIETY.** 1. It arose first from a mother's piety. It was the mother's act by means of which all his early impressions were of sacred things. It has been said that the secret of greatness is ordinarily to be traced to mothers. The influence of the mother is the most powerful upon the young life—it springs from purest love. We owe Augustine to Monica's prayers, and in modern times there are those who have told us what was the source of their success—a mother's training. 2. But influence has its limits. Samuel, as a child, ministered before the Lord." He accepted his vocation, and rose to its demands. 3. Samuel ministered to God as a Levite. Some have thought he was a priest, because he offered sacrifices; but he offered sacrifice by "a special commission" from God, because of the degeneracy of the priesthood. In the same way, sacrifices were offered in different places, instead of one, not because the Levitical laws were unknown, but because it was not possible to keep to one spot until the ark was recovered and settled in its final resting-place. God is not bound by His own laws or ordinary modes of acting, whether in the sphere of nature or of grace, and sometimes directly asserts His supremacy. 4. That Samuel was a Levite is seen from the fact that his father was a Levite (1 Chron. vi. 27). He is described as an Ephrathite, because his family resided in Ephraim. Further, he was not of the sons of Aaron. And the "linen ephod," according to some writers, was a Levitical vestment. This, however, seems doubtful. Both the ephod and the "little coat," which was a long outer garment, were not exclusively sacerdotal vestments, so that it cannot be gathered from the mention of them that Samuel had an "irregular priesthood." In the Psalms he is not included amongst priests: "Moses and Aaron among His priests;" but "Samuel among them that call upon His Name" (Ps. xcix. 6). 5. Samuel, besides being a Levite and a Nazarite, was the first of a new order, "the goodly fellowship of the Prophets." St. Peter puts him first (Acts iii. 29): "all the prophets from Samuel." The stream of communication between God and man had almost dried

up (1 Sam. iii. 1). III. LESSONS. 1. Parents may learn from Hannah's devotion the blessedness of offering their children to God, and that in no grudging spirit, but as realizing with Hannah the nobleness of a life consecrated to God, and the blessings which were brought thereby to His people. 2. Children should learn from Samuel never to put off the service of God to later life, when it is more difficult and less enthusiastic. Samuel, when he was gray-headed, had the happiest reflection when he looked back upon early faithfulness (1 Sam. xii.). 3. Repentance after a youth misspent is a means of return to God, and may be the basis of future holiness; but preserved innocence has a beauty, and a greatness, and a buoyancy, and a likeness to Christ, the "Holy Child," which the penitent prodigal knows not. (*Canon Hutchings, M.A.*) *The ministering child*:—One of our poets has beautifully remarked that "the child is father to the man;" and the remark is as true as it is beautiful. Just as youth is characterized, so will manhood be distinguished. Youth is the period of impressions, when the heart is tender, and the features begin to be developed. Like the tree which grows as it was influenced when a sapling, man is moulded by the bias of his childhood. "The boyhood of great men" illustrates this in a striking degree. In the days of his romping boyhood, it is said Cromwell had so little respect for dignity that he struck prince Charles while they were playing together at Hitchinbrook; at which hospitable mansion rested the royal caravan which conveyed James to the throne of England. And in after years no sanctity of royalty could restrain the triumphant Oliver from bringing Charles to the scaffold. When Nelson in his eager birds'-nesting had placed himself in a position of danger, near a river which he could not cross, and had caused much alarm to his relatives, his reply to an angry grandmamma, who expressed her wonder that fear had not driven him home, was, "Fear, grandmamma! I never saw fear! who is he?" And this is the most expressive character of that great Admiral, whose career was so brilliant, and whose death was so brave. Mozart, when a child of seven years, composed a concerto for the harpsichord, and died when only thirty-five, with immortality on his memory and his music. Though piety is not a birthright, and has been frequently ingrafted on a wild career, yet none will wonder that Samuel's childhood, so beautiful in piety and promise, should result in a godly manhood, a blessing to his parents, his country, and his Church. Let us, then, contemplate Samuel in this interesting period of his history, and mark how the good seed took root and evinced its verdure, and how parental godliness sought to bless and comfort a young man from home. It would be no small trial to Elkanah and Hannah to leave their cherished son in the tabernacle of Shiloh, where abandoned priests were ministering. God cared for Samuel, and kept him from the evil of his times. He was "one of the cares of Providence," and never wanted any good thing. Resident in the sanctuary, he was to be trained for the ministry; and though a child, he was clad with a linen ephod. In the Levitical dispensation the ephod, which the priest wore, attested the same great truth. Whenever he drew near to consult the Lord and to offer sacrifice, he put on the linen ephod (1 Sam. xiv. 3; xxiii. 9.) Then he could plead on behalf of men, and act as mediator. It sanctified his person, and made him a type of Him who was to come. In the New Testament Church there is an ephod for all to wear who would approach God. It is the spotless robe of the Redeemer's righteousness. This is the symbol of acceptance, and guarantees admission at all times to the presence-chamber of Jehovah. Samuel was young in years. He could not know much of divine things; but he was capable of experiencing the divine blessing. He was more than a dedicated child. He was born from above. An illustrious ancestry did not so much ennoble him as did this heavenly birth. It exalted him to a place in that family whose names are written in heaven, Samuel ministered before the Lord. He was occupied in the tabernacle service. Levites did not usually begin their service until they were twenty-five years of age, but Samuel was taken into active office in his very childhood. The son of his adoption seemed better than Eli's sons by blood. It revived the hearts of all the godly throughout the land, when Samuel in his youthful beauty was seen in the holy place. It is ever interesting to see youth in the service of Christ. "Perhaps," says Matthew Henry, "he attended immediately on Eli's person—was ready to him to fetch and bring as he had occasion; and that is called ministering to the Lord. . . . He could light a candle, or hold a dish, or run on an errand, or shut a door; and because he did this with a pious disposition of mind, it is called ministering to the Lord, and great notice is taken of it." We have not now a tabernacle such as was in Shiloh, nor have we such ser-

vices as Samuel was called upon to render; but in the Church of God there is a sphere wide enough for the most active energy, diversified enough for many workers, and simple enough for the youngest to undertake. The hearts of parents often beat anxiously for their absent children. Hannah's prayers would also often follow him, and her hands were busily occupied with providing for his wants. As a prudent wife, "she sought wool and flax, and wrought willingly with her hands," and made a coat for her boy to wear at Shiloh. Her heart was with him in the tabernacle; and as she wrought with her distaff, or wove her web, or plied needle and thread, she thought of her absent son. You may have absent children who, amidst the business and sin of great cities, are much exposed. Have a care over them. Remember their case every day at your family altar. Write often to them words of truth and soberness. It is specially useful to see them often. Some who have been early from home and separated from friends may read these pages. You had in the beginning of youth days to rough "life's tempestuous sea." Think often of home. There is a charm in that little word. Think of a parent's yearning heart on behalf of the absent. Letters are the electric wires of families; "they bear in their bosoms some message of love," and make the heart thrill. Hannah was an industrious wife and mother. Among the many virtues of female character this is not the least. In the portrait of a virtuous woman sketched by King Lemuel in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, out of twenty-two verses descriptive of female excellence, eleven refer to industry; and of these eleven scarcely one points to labour that is not useful. Many fritter their time away in labours that bring no profit, but she whom the Bible delights to honour is industrious in well-doing. It is to be remembered, however, that the duties of a house and family have proved snares to many who, like Martha, have been cumbered with such serving, and distracted with many cares. Where there are habits of order and of prayer, these evils may be avoided, and while "not slothful in business," the Christian matron may be also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Hannah was not so occupied with domestic duties as to be absent from the sanctuary and the feast of the passover. The loan which Elkanah and Hannah gave to the Lord when they left Samuel at Shiloh was not lost. It had its blessed recompense. God is never in debt to His people, and he has graciously promised a recompense. It may not be always realized in this life, but it shall be at the resurrection of the just. What an encouragement to well-doing, and to sacrifice for the Lord's cause! (*R. Steel.*) *Childhood and service*:—A sweet picture! Here is a child who came into the world, as it were, through the very gate of prayer. So to speak, he was the direct creature of intercession. His mother went immediately to God's house for him; actually went straight up to God, and asked Him for the child. Here, then, is a child-prophet, and that fact is pregnant with the deepest signification. That a child should have any place in God's temple, and especially that a child should hold office in that temple, is a circumstance which should arrest our attention. 1. God's interest in human life begins at the earliest possible period. When does God's interest in human life begin? When does Christ's heart begin to yearn in pity over all human creatures? Is it when they are five years old, or ten; does He shut up His love until they are twenty-one? The question may appear quaint, but I press it. When does Christ's interest in human life begin? I contend that His interest relates to life, not to age; to birth, not to birth-days. As soon as a child is born, that great redeeming heart yearns with pitying love. I do then encourage all parents to bring their children early to the temple; to lend them unto the Lord before they can give themselves away; and what know we, but that the mother's loan may be confirmed by the man's own gift! 2. "Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." Great rivers have often little sources. The river of a whole year's joy came out of making this little coat. It seems a very simple circumstance to put down in the world's great volume that Hannah made Samuel a little coat every year! Mark, then, how age must work for childhood, strength must toil lovingly and helpfully for weakness. The resources of life must be expended on the children of need. This is the way to obtain happiness; namely, by making those around us happy. He who sends joy down to the roots of society, shall find that joy reproducing itself in the solaces and comforts of his own life. The making of this little coat caused the hours to fly speedily; and the gift of it, at the appointed time, enriched the giver more than it enriched the wearer. So it is that giving is getting, and

that scattering may be the truest consolidation of wealth. 3. Now let us advance a step, and see how this child proceeds. In the ensuing chapter he is still called a child—a ministering child. Experience has taught me to have more faith in children than in adults. Children are more like God than men and women are. Children are unsophisticated, straightforward, simple, trustful, joyous, loving; adults are often crooked, crafty, double-minded, selfish, moody, rancorous, and vile. I sympathise with the poet when he wishes that he could go back to God through his “yesterdays.” Alas, there is no way to heaven except through our to-morrows; and as we get older by travelling through these to-morrows, we often lose the simplicity and beauty of childhood, and engross ourselves with engagements which tend rather to degrade and unfit us for the high society of heaven.

4. According to the opening verse of the third chapter, “the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” That which is rare is precious. The word of the Lord did not shine forth in noon-day glory; it was like a glimmer on the horizon. God’s kingdom on the earth begins with small demonstrations. It is small as a mustard seed. Oftentimes in the Gospel narrative it is likened to all minutest things. In our day there is open vision. The whole heaven is blazing with light. But who cares to-day, when England is flooded with the celestial glory? We, as a nation, being exalted to heaven with multitudinous privileges, are not unlikely to be cast down into hell, through our perversion and personal neglect. It is a beautiful picture this of Eli and Samuel engaged in temple service. Here we have extreme age and extreme youth united in the same labour. It is as if sunrise and sunset had found a meeting-point; here is all the brightness of the one and all the gorgeous colouring and solemn pomp of the other. What is the lesson? The lesson I see is, that God has work for all classes.

I. **LOOKING AT THIS SCENE, WE HAVE, FIRST OF ALL, ALMIGHTY GOD CALLING MAN AT AN UNLIKELY TIME.** The time is night: deep sleep has fallen upon man, and in the time of rest and unconsciousness the voice from heaven sounds. Why not in the temple, and why not in open day? This is like God; the darkness and the light are both alike unto Him.

II. **IN THE NEXT PLACE WE HAVE ALMIGHTY GOD CALLING AN UNLIKELY PERSON.** We should have thought that it would have been more probable that God would have called the aged prophet rather than the ministering child. But the first shall be last and the last first. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A child’s ministry*:—Samuel was very, very young; but Samuel’s little efforts to minister to the Lord were precious; and are here recorded by God Himself. Is it only the grown up, strong children in a family, who are noticed, and approved of, by their parents? Do not your father and mother love the little infant that can but just creep about? and if it does but put forth its little arm, to show its affection for them, do they not notice it, and look very pleased? Oh, yes, you know they do; nay, you sometimes imagine that they think more of the little ones than of you great ones, and take more notice of any feeble effort that the youngest makes, than of all your great doings; and I could almost think that if our heavenly Father has peculiar favourites in his family, it is his little infants, whom he has taught to stretch out the desires of their souls after him. It is his Samuel and his Timothy, who from childhood have known and loved the Scriptures and the God of the sacred Scriptures. But, perhaps you think, Samuel could not help being devoted to the Lord and serving him, when he was left so young at the temple, with good old Eli and good people around him. My dear child, if you were to get a bramble, and plant it in some very good ground, and put good trees all round it, would you expect your bramble to become a good tree likewise? You smile at the very idea. But does not God tell you in his word, that our hearts are like thorns and brambles, and that no power, short of his, can make a myrtle or a rose grow up instead of the thorn? Nay, does not daily experience teach us the same lesson? While we look at the holy child Samuel with delight and love, our hearts ache while looking at the two wicked sons of Eli; abusing the office of priest, and causing the way of truth to be evil spoken of. You are none of you fond of a thorn or thistle, I dare say; if they catch you when you are walking or running, they will prick or scratch you—and you get no fruit from them: but when they get in among your favourite fruit trees or flowers, and choke them up, and hinder their growth, they make you doubly angry with them. Now this was the state of things with the wicked sons of Eli: they were not only like worthless thorns, but, by growing up among the people of the Lord, and ministering in holy things, they stopped the growth of the faithful, and even caused the Lord’s people to transgress. We gladly turn awhile from so awful a

subject to look at the dear child Samuel. "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." We have here the tender affection of the mother pointed out, with the blessed firmness of the Christian. While she brings him his little coat of her own making, as a token of her love, she expresses no desire to take back the loan which she had lent unto the Lord—the loan of her only child—but cheerfully leaves him time after time, and returns to her home, where she had not a child to receive or to cheer her. But who was ever a loser by lending unto the Lord? look! whatsoever he layeth out in cheerful, humble confidence, it shall be restored a hundredfold into his bosom. (*Helen Plumptre.*) **Moreover his mother made him a little coat.**—*A talk to mothers.*—We have three separate statements of the nature of a little child. The first is that, in some way, it is utterly depraved and lost; not capable of conceiving one good thought, saying one good word, or doing one good thing. This statement, to my mind, is untrue. It clashes with the loftiest revelation ever made to our race about the child-nature. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." If the child is utterly depraved, and of such is the kingdom of heaven, wherein does the kingdom of heaven differ from the kingdom of hell? The second theory is one that I have heard from some liberal Christians—that the heart and nature of a little child are like a fresh garden-mould in the spring-time. Nothing has sprung out of it; but the seeds of vice are already bedded down into it; and we must plant good seeds, and nurse them until there is a strong growth of the better promise—carefully, all the while, weeding out whatever is bad as it comes to the surface. At the first glance this seems to be about the truth. Still, I fear it has not come so much out of that true philosophy which is founded on a close observation of our nature, as it has come out of a desire not to differ so very far from those who denounce us heartily as unchristian. Such an idea of the child-nature is, after all, a moderate theory of infant depravity; and as such I reject it, so far as it gives any preoccupation and predominance to sin, and accept the third theory, as the true and pure gospel about the child-nature; namely, that the kingdom of heaven, in a child, is like unto a man that sowed good seed in his field; but afterward, while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away; and when the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. The good seed is sown first. The good is primary, and purely good; the bad is secondary, and not totally bad. And every little child ministers before the Lord, and every mother makes his garments from year to year. I propose to speak briefly on the nature and possibilities of this mother influence, what it is, and what it may be.

1. And note, first of all, that while in after-life the father may come to an equal or even stronger influence over the child—in the plastic morning of life, when the infant soul puts on its first robes of joy and love and faith and wonder, the hand of the mother alone is permitted to give them their rich quality and texture.
2. Then, secondly, while it is eminently true that the little child has such rich endowment, and you have such a wonderful pre-eminence, it is also true that the possibilities open out two ways—you may greatly blight his life, or you may greatly bless it. The garments that mothers fit on to the spirits of little children, like the garments that they fit to the outward form, only more certainly, have a great deal to do with that child's whole future life. Let me give you instances that are kept in the archives of the world. What would you judge to be the foremost thing in Washington? The obvious answer is, his perfect, spotless, radiant integrity. Now it is an instructive fact for mothers that of the few books that have come down to us with which the mother of Washington surrounded her boy in early life, the one most worn and well used is a book on morals, by that eminent pattern of the old English integrity, Sir Matthew Hale; and the place where that book opens easiest, where it is most dog-eared and frail, is at a chapter on the great account which we must all give of the deeds done in the body. Before that boy went out of his home his mother took care to stamp the image and superscription of integrity deeply on his soul. What, after his great genius, would you mention as the most notable thing in William Ellery Channing? We answer at once, his constant loyalty to a broad, free, fearless examination of every question that could present itself to him; a frank confession of what he believed to be true about it, no matter what was said against it; and an active endeavour to make that truth a part of his life. Channing testified, with a proud affection, of his mother: "She

had the firmness to examine the truth, to speak it, and to act upon it, beyond all women I ever knew." And so it was that, when her frail boy must go out into the battle, she had armed him with the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. And so one might go on reciting instances almost endlessly, if it were needful, to show how true it is that the mother makes the man. What, then, positively, shall the mother do who will do her best? I will answer this question first by noting what she shall not do. And I cannot say one thing before this—that the spiritual garment she fashions for her little ones from year to year shall not be black. All mothers know how long before their children can utter a word they can read gladness or gloom in the mother's face. Let her smile, and the child will laugh; let her look sad, and it will weep. Now, some mothers, if they have had great troubles or are much tried in their daily life, get into a habit of sadness that is like a second nature. They talk with unction of who is dead, and how young they were, and how many are sick, and what grief is abroad altogether on the earth. And the child listens to all that is said. The mother may think he does not care; but, if my own earliest memories are at all true to the common childhood, he does care. These things chill him through and through. Then I would ask that the garment of spiritual influence, which you are ever fashioning, shall not be of the nature of a straight-jacket. Has your boy a heavy foot, a loud voice, a great appetite, a defiant way, and a burly presence altogether? Then thank God for it, more than if your husband had a farm where corn grows twelve feet high; your child has in him the making of a great and good man. The only fear is that you will fail to meet the demand of this strong, grand nature and try to break where you ought to build. The question for you to solve, mother, is not how to subdue him, but how to direct him. Dr. Kane was a wonder of boisterous energy in childhood, climbing trees and roofs, projecting himself against all obstacles, until he got the name of being the worst boy in all Branch-town; but time revealed the divinity of this rough life, when he bearded the ice-king in his own domain, and made himself a name in Arctic exploration second to none. I shall not speak in any material sense; but, when the child begins to think, he at once begins to question. He is set here in a great universe of wonder and mystery, and he wants to know its meaning and the meaning of himself. But some mothers, when their children come to them with their questions in all good faith, either treat the question with levity, or get afraid, and reprove the little thing for asking. Mothers, this is all wrong. This is one of your rarest opportunities to clothe the spirit of your child in the fresh garments that will make him all beautiful, as he stands before the Lord. Then, as this primitive woman would be evermore careful to meet the enlarged form of her child, as she went to see him stand before the Lord from year to year, will you be careful to meet the enlarged spirit of your child? I do fear for the mother who will not note how her child demands and needs ever new and larger confidences. (*R. Collyer.*) *A coat for Samuel*.—1. Hannah stands before you, then, to-day, in the first place, as an industrious mother. There was no need for her to work. Elkanah, her husband, was far from poor. She is industrious from principle as well as from pleasure. God would not have a mother become a drudge or a slave; He would have her employ all the helps possible in this day in the rearing of her children. But Hannah ought never to be ashamed to be found making a coat for Samuel. Most mothers need no counsel in this direction. The wrinkles on their brow, the pallor on their cheek, attest that they are faithful in their maternal duties. Indolent and unfaithful mothers will make indolent and unfaithful children. You cannot expect neatness and order in any house where the daughters see nothing but slatternness and upside-downativeness in their parents. The mothers of Samuel Johnson, and of Alfred the Great, and of Isaac Newton, and of Saint Augustine, and of Richard Cecil, and of President Edwards, for the most part were industrious, hard-working mothers. 2. Again: Hannah stands before you to-day as an intelligent mother. From the way in which she talked in this chapter, and from the way she managed this boy, you know she was intelligent. There are no persons in a community who need to be so wise and well-informed as mothers. O, this work of culturing children for this world and the next. This child is timid, and it must be roused up and pushed out into activity. 3. Again: Hannah stands before you to-day as a Christian mother. 4. Again, and lastly: Hannah stands before you to-day the rewarded mother. For all the coats she made for Samuel; for all the prayers she offered for him; for the discipline she exerted over him, she got abundant compensation in the piety, and the usefulness, and the popularity of her son

Samuel; and that is true in all ages. Every mother gets full pay for all the prayers and tears in behalf of her children. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The little coat*:—I. WE HAVE HERE—THE SACRED TOIL OF A MOTHER. 1. House labour consecrated by love and worship. Serve God, then, in toiling for your children. Offer to the Lord the sacrifice of your weariness for them; and you will find that God will not be "unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love" in your ministering to those whom you have tried to make His saints. 2. We have here not only labour blessed by love and worship, but also household love consecrated by religion. "Love is of God;" and that home affection is not worthy the name, of which the beginning, continuance, and end are not in God. 3. And now in a return of blessing we have religion beautified by loving labour. Religion and common labour are not only not incongruous, they give to one another added dignity, blessedness, and comeliness. II. THE DUTIFUL, PIOUS MEMORIAL OF A SON. I have already presumed what we have fair warrant for:—that we have this story either by Samuel's own writing in this book, or through his communication of the story to others. Either position implies on Samuel's part a tender remembrance that must not be lightly passed by. Though you can think only of a lowly home and homely people as your life's guides; yet, if like Samuel you can remember common work done lovingly for you, it is worth your remembering and honouring. The same truth is to be held by fathers and mothers. No man or woman can leave to children a more honourable memory than that of hard work, of faith, and diligent labour of love in or for the home, in and for the Lord. (*G. B. Ryley.*)

Ver. 21. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.—*Growth the best test*:—"Where there is life there will be growth, and if grace be true, it will surely increase. A painted flower keepeth always at the same pitch and stature; the artist may bestow beauty upon it, but he cannot bestow life. A painted child will be as little ten years hence as it is now." What need there is to observe the wide distinction between the picture and the living thing! Of painted likenesses of Christians we have more than enough; nor is the manufacture of portraits a difficult operation: what we want is the real thing and not the artistic imitation. Manton saith well that growth is the test. Many professors must be for ever beginning again: they stick where they were, or thought they were. They were anxious about their souls, and are so still. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 23, 24. Nay, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear.—*Weakness is wickedness*:—It does not often occur to us what shame and guilt belong to mortal vacillation and weakness. Too often a man's weakness is accepted as a sufficient excuse for his sin. Outbursts of evil passion are excused because a man has a passionate nature. Vacillation is condoned, because a man by nature is pliant and indecisive. Inconsiderateness is held to be blameless, because a man is impulsive by natural disposition. That all this is wrong in judgment and false in principle, could not be more sternly taught than in the experience of Eli. Blameless and pure, humble and devout, there is no more beautiful character, in many of its aspects, to be found in Scripture than his; yet how stern the rebuke which is passed upon him, and how terrible the retribution! Plain it is that in God's sight moral weakness is sin. At the Bar of Judgment "I cannot" finds no acceptance as a plea against "You must." To say that you have not the strength, the courage, the resoluteness to do right is a confession which is itself a shameful wrong. It is the plea of a weakling, and weakness in God's sight is wickedness. It is the plea of a coward, and moral cowardice is sin. (*J. Bainton.*) *Paternal leniency*:—I. ELI'S FATAL LENIENCY. 1. He saith over softly to them, "Why do ye such things?" (v. 23). This was to reprove them, saith Jerom, with the lenity of a father, not with the authority of a magistrate: 'Tis an old saying, "Pity spoils a city"; sure I am it did so here, for it spoiled his family, causing the priesthood to be removed from it. 2. "I hear of your evil doings." This was too gentle, to mention them in the general only, and not to particularise them with their detestable aggravations, he should have rebuked them, cuttingly, or sharply (Tit. 2, 15) with all authority. 3. "By all the people:" As if it were their report only, and that he was put on by the people to say what he said. 4. "Nay, my sons." He should have set on his reproof, by saying "Ye act more like sons of Belial than my sons, the sons of the high priests of the Most High God. 5. "'Tis no good report:" He should have called it, the most dismal and diabolical, if he had had a right zeal for God's glory, &c. 6. He was not willing

to reprove them, but the clamours of others forced him to do it. 7. He did not rebuke them publicly (1 Tim. v. 20) for the public sins to make the plaster as broad as the wound. 8. It was only a verbal reproof, whereas he should have put them out of their priesthood and punished them for their adultery according to the law, without respect of persons as a judge, &c. 9. He did not rebuke them in time, but let them live long in sin. 10. He soon ceased chiding them, so 'tis said, "He restrained them not," (ch. iii. 13.) II. APOLOGY FOR ELI IN THIS CASE IS—That he now was very old, some suppose him to be now come to his ninetieth year, even in his dotage, so could not himself converse with his sons, so as to observe their mal-administrations, and withal, he was dim-sighted, so could not so well see their sinful practices: his superannuation caused his frequent absence from the Tabernacle, which gave a greater opportunity for his sons' wickedness, to whom the management of God's worship was (in their father's retirement) be-trusted, and 'tis not improbable, his sons did not much regard his reproofs, because he was old and over-worn, but themselves, being in their vigour, had married wives, and were fathers of children. And 'tis commonly known that old age doth incline men to mercy, so that it is no wonder if Eli seem rather to flatter than to chastise his sons. III. JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED ON ELI. The promise for the perpetuation of the priesthood to Aaron's family (Exod. xxviii. 43, and xxix. 9) was conditional only so long as they did honour God therein, which condition the elder line of Aaron kept not in the case of Jephthah's vow, therefore was the high priesthood transferred to the younger line, which now upon the like failure in the condition, made a new forfeiture thereof, by dishonouring God so notoriously in Eli's sons. 1. This may be called breach of promise, as that is (Num. xiv. 34) when the old generation were wasted in the wilderness, and yet the new one was brought into Canaan as God had promised. 2. This Man of God threatens the extirpation of Eli's family (vers. 31, 32). His arm shall be cut off. 3. This Man of God threatens him with a rival in the place of the priesthood, which he or his posterity should behold with their eyes, to their great grief and regret (verses 32, 33). 4. This Man of God threatens him with the violent death of his sons before their father's death (verses 34, 35). 5. He threatens him with the poverty of his posterity (verse 36). They shall come crouching as Abiathar did (1 Kings. 2. 26) when banished to Anathoth. (C. Ness.) *Eli's imbecility*:—Eli's are out of place in this world; they are only fit for the society of angels. Place one of them over a business. Oh, he is such a good man! Trusts everybody, dismisses nobody, lets every knave and idle fellow about the premises play tricks with him. By-and-bye the end comes, and you spell it with ruin. Such a dear, well-meaning man, and so unfortunate; you all pity him. Yes, such men are to be pitied, but mainly because they are so weak and easy-going. Good men, but not fit to be at the head of anything. Not fit to rule a kingdom or a lunatic asylum, or even a church, and perhaps, least of all, a home. It is a pity when domestic government gets into their hands. Such nice men! such angelic women! But, alas! they make a pitiable business of it if they become fathers and mothers. (J. G. Greenough.) *Necessity of parental severity*:—When George III. wished his two sons, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, to be instructed, he sent for one of the most rigid disciplinarians of the day; and when the king and the teacher stood together, one would have been at a loss to know whether to admire more the majesty of royalty or the majesty of learning. The king gave a side glance at the two boys who stood at his feet, and said to the stern doctor who stood before him, "Sir, I wish you to teach these, my two sons." "And, please your majesty," replied the teacher, "how do you wish these princes to be treated?" "Just treat them," returned the king, "as you would treat the sons of a private gentleman; if they require it, flog them; just do with them as you do at Westminster School." And so the doctor did; he let them know by hard experience that the rod was made for the fool's back. And when Louis XIV. of France, one of the proudest kings that ever sat on the French throne, began to feel his inferiority in knowledge after he had arrived at the years of maturity, he complained to his courtiers that he was ignorant of many things which they knew. Upon which a nobleman near him ventured to hint that when a child he was wilful and wayward, and refused to listen to the voice of instruction. "What!" he exclaimed, "was there not birch enough in the forest of Fontainebleau?" (J. Hutchinson.) *Laziness of parental authority*:—Eli surely has his parallel in many a moral household which presents the spectacle of a father of exemplary life and character surrounded by

children who, as they phrase it, take their own line in whatever form of dissipation or extravagance, or at best of aimless and frivolous living. The fault may be altogether with the child, but generally in this world when sons go wrong there are at least faults on both sides. And may it not be that in the critical years, when character was taking shape, and temptations were pressing hard with eager importunity, nothing was done, perhaps nothing was said to check, to rebuke, to guide, to encourage? The boy's character was allowed to drift; it was allowed to drift by the man whose sense of responsibility as his father should have saved him from a mistake so ruinous. Authority need not be despotism; it may be tender and considerate to any extent, provided only that it is authority, and that its voice is not silent, nor its arm paralysed by a misplaced affection or by a want of moral courage, or by secret indifference, to the greatest issues which lie before every human being. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Ver. 25. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him.—
The sinner's friend:—Even had we no revelation on the subject, a future judgment would be inferred by us from reason; for we should be led by analogy to conclude, that, as when "one man sinned against another the judge judged him" and awarded his punishment, so God would certainly enter into judgment with those who sinned against Him. We are taught it in God's dealings both with individuals and nations; we are told it in the plainest terms. We see it, in the expulsion of our guilty first parents from the once happy Eden. We see it, in the fire and brimstone which consumed Sodom and Gomorrah. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him." Thanks be to God for this arrangement: judges are his vicegerents on earth, and bear the sword for Him. Thankful ought we to be for this blessing; for laws and magistrates and judges—"the powers that be"—are ordained of God. Without them, the bonds of society would be broken in sunder; the bonds of iniquity would everywhere prevail. If when one man sins against another, the judge judges and condemns him, what shall be done when God cometh to judgment? If an earthly judge can punish severely a sinner on earth, how shall not God terribly judge and punish sinners in His great day! If a judge can pass sentence for the punishment of a man's person or the taking away of his life here, how much more shall God pass sentence on the soul for an eternal hereafter! If there be none to put in an arrest of judgment for a condemned sinner now, who shall entreat, who shall save, when God shall pass judgment then? If the whole of the machinery employed for putting in force laws passed by man on earth, be of an arresting and startling nature, how much more when God shall enter into judgment with the breakers of His law! If an accused person on trial here would employ an able advocate to plead his cause, how much more shall we need and desire the help of one to entreat for us when standing at the bar of God! If we anxiously watch the chain and tissue of evidence produced before the judge in courts of assize holden here, shall we not with intense solicitude mark the evidence produced from the books which are to be opened and exposed to view in that great day. God has denounced His judgment against sin, and has passed the sentence on the sinner, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." Now God's truth and God's justice are the pillars which support His throne; and these, admitting of no room for the exhibition of unconditional mercy, demand the execution of the sentence, part of which has already taken effect, the other part is hanging over our heads. In Adam we are all dead; on account of his sin in paradise, guilt and ruin were entailed upon us: we are partakers in his fall and in the consequences of his fall, he being our covenant head. And, must this be our inevitable doom—must all mankind perish everlastingly? because we have all sinned against the Lord, is there none to entreat for us? It was so once. God the Father planned the scheme of a vicarious sacrifice: God the Son, by assuming human nature and dying in its form, offered that sacrifice in the very person of the sinner. But are there any here who look to some other than Christ to entreat for them? The hope is vain. The expectation cannot be realised. There is but one mediator between God and man, and that Mediator is Christ. No creature can entreat for another: the desperateness of our case is so great, that the united force of men and angels can never reach it. Are there any, who fondly hope that they have no need of a Saviour to entreat for them? who put their trust in good deeds? This is a delusive hope. Here, then, I come to the practical part of my subject. We must all stand before the judgment seat: we shall all need Jesus Christ to entreat

for us with God then. I beseech you, then, to flee for refuge to Him, that Saviour who gave Himself a ransom for all. Make Him your friend now, and you shall not lack one to entreat for you when the heavens are riven, and the Almighty Judge descends to hold that grand assize, which will award to all their everlasting doom. (*E. J. Wilcocks, M.A.*) **If a man sin against the Lord who shall entreat for him?**—*Reasons why man cannot entreat for us:*—1. Man cannot entreat for you because he is of your class. We are all in the same boat. One man has sinned one way, another a different way; but they are both sinners. The difficulty is that a man thinks that because another does not sin in his way, the other is the greater sinner. That is the mischief. 2. Again, man cannot entreat for us, because the offence is not against man. 3. No man can entreat for us because he does not know what the offence is, and nobody else can help him to know. Black never looks so black as when it is against white. The sun does not make the dust, the sun reveals it. We cannot see our offence, as its far-reaching, its depth, its corruptness, its awfulness; only God knows what sin is. Who then shall entreat? Here comes the great Gospel of Grace. Jesus did not die instead of us, He died for us. He says: "I only came to meet this great problem; reconciliation must come by grace; eternity must help time; the heavens must come to redeem the earth. I have come to seek and to save that which was lost." If one man sin against another a judge can save him, but if a man sin against God, how then? (*Christian Weekly.*)

Ver. 26. And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.—*Child growth:*—One of the most beautiful things that God has made in the world is growth, and the world is full of it. God did not make a great Samuel at once, but a little child Samuel, who grew before Him. I will speak of four thoughts as included in growing before the Lord. I. Samuel grew AT THE LORD'S HOUSE. At this time there was no temple. There was no tabernacle, with the court round about, where the burnt offerings were consumed on the altar. II. Samuel grew IN THE LORD'S SIGHT. This means that the Lord was pleased to see Samuel grow as he did. "Grow in grace" is the Apostle's word. Growth in love is the true progress; for love is holiness, and holiness is light, and light is God. III. Samuel grew BY THE LORD'S GRACE. His mother had lent him to the Lord, and the Lord saw to his growing. IV. Samuel grew FOR THE LORD'S SERVICE. 1. Little services from little people are acceptable to God. 2. The little grows by and by to the great. (*J. Edmond.*) *The training of a prophet:*—The Bible tells us very little about the childhood of its great men. We know nothing of the early days of Abraham, or of the child life of Moses, David, St. Peter, and St. Paul. Even of Jesus there is only one beautiful picture given of His young bright days. The only exception which the Bible makes is the instance of Samuel. The account of his early life is really the only thing of the kind which the sacred pages contain. It is the story of a child's growth, of a child's education, of a child's first prayers and religious beginnings, of a child's shaping into a man of God. I. IT TELLS US OF HIS MOTHER. No biography is complete without that. The father is not of so much consequence in the story; the mother is indispensable. Paint her moral portrait for me, and I can guess what the child will be like. Samuel's life began well, with a praying mother kneeling beside his cradle, and praying lips teaching him the first words he knew. She laid her dearest treasure upon the altar, and prayed, "Take him, O God, and make him Thine and make him worthy." And the Lord answered, as Jesus might have answered, "O, woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Our children will become in the main features what their mothers prayerfully and persistently determine they shall be. The picture of life which the mother always holds up before them will be the end, the ideal towards which they strive, and her daily habitual thoughts, her dominant and ruling thoughts will shape and colour their hopes and dreams. II. WE ARE TOLD ABOUT HIS SCHOOLMASTER. He was the one pupil of a sad-hearted old man. There is a touch of pathos in that part of the story. This child became the one joy of a lonely house, the music in its silent chambers. He came to Eli as the sunbeams come into a prison, or the smell of flowers to a sick man on his bed. He was a joyless old man, wearied and disappointed, who trailed behind him the broken threads of all his life's hopes. His own sons had become his shame, so that he wished he had buried them when they were little ones. His country was in danger, for the people had

forsaken God and all good things, and were on the downgrade towards ruin. He was a gentle and kindly old man, but with no strength for the position which he filled. His hands were weak and his eyes dim. Dark was the outlook, and his life was going down with sorrow to the grave. And now see the goodness of the Lord. There comes into his house this sunbeam, this ripple of laughter on the sullen stream, this song in the night. A child whose feet ran in the way of his commandments, a child whom it was good to love and a joy to teach, a child who would take the place of his lost sons and provide new interests and create new hopes. There was something to live for and work for again. The child's presence brought summer into the drear winter, and warmth and cheerfulness into the cold desolate heart. On that child the old man poured his affection and gave all his remaining strength, and the child took lovely shape under these worn but tender hands. He must have been a good schoolmaster though he was no great good at anything else. He was no prophet, but he helped to make a prophet. He had no greatness of his own, but he developed the greatness of another. If Israel owed him nothing else, it owed him a Samuel, and that was no small debt. His life bore that magnificent fruit in its old age, and many, a successful life has far less to show at the end. Call no man or woman a failure who has sent out one brave true life to enrich the world. When you think of Samuel do not forget the gentle, tired, old man who was his schoolmaster. III. WE ARE TOLD OF HIS GROWTH. But there are different kinds of growth. Some children grow taller and stronger, but they do not improve in other things. They get a little more knowledge, but they do not get much wiser. They increase in stature, years, and strength; but they seem to lose, bit by bit, all their goodness, and what was beautiful in them becomes ugly, and what was kind and gentle and innocent becomes selfish and peevish and hard and unlovely. Samuel grew in favour with God and also with man. He grew by prayer. God heard him, and for every prayer gave him a little more wisdom and a little more goodness. And so he grew in obedience, in truthfulness, in modesty, in kindness of heart, in helpfulness. And everybody saw that he was shaping well. For just as we can tell from the first signs whether a tree will grow crooked or straight, and whether a plant will grow into poisonous nightshade or into a fragrant rose bush, and whether the glittering particles under the sea will form a common oyster shell or crystallise into a pearl, so can those who watch a child's life to-day know what the coming man or woman will be. Samuel was steadily shaping into the life which God had designed for him. IV. THAT HE WAS THE RISING STAR IN A DARK SKY, AND THE HOPE OF A GODLESS LAND. It was a dreary and desperate time. The few who, like old Eli, still believed in God and righteousness were at their wits' end. They saw no tiniest rift in the black stormcloud which darkened the sky. And yet, in the midst of all that, God was training this child as a teacher and deliverer, keeping him outside all the impurity and unbelief, giving him a big heart and a wise mind, and fitting him for great leadership. If you read these three chapters, you seem to hear two distinct voices speaking. One is a voice of groaning complaint, sad foreboding; the other, a voice of hope, promise, and good cheer. One tells of greedy priests who were robbing the people and plundering the sanctuary; and then the other voice breaks in, "But the child Samuel grew and ministered before the Lord." Once more the doleful lips take up the strain, and tell again how the ruling men are wallowing in the filthiest sins and the people mocking at religion, and all the wisdom turned to folly; and again the other voice replies, "But the child grew on, grew in favour with God and man." Clouds thickening above, and danger and ruin threatening on every side. Still the child grows, and God is with him. And so God is training our children to-day. There are always new hopes given to us when we see child life, for in every group of children, especially if they are God-taught children, there are the bright and great possibilities of the future. Instead of the fathers shall come up the children. When there is a dearth of great men there is often a larger abundance of young souls slowly growing into greatness. The seed has been sown and the harvest will be reaped further on. We shall have them again, never fear. The Samuels, the brave leaders, the men made mighty by faith and prayer, they are growing in many a godly home to-day. The Lord knows them though we do not. (*J. G. Greenough. M.A.*) *The child Samuel*:—I. Now, first of all, WHAT WAS SAMUEL, AS DESCRIBED IN THE WORD OF GOD? There are among others three things about him, which I want to tell you of: his character, his conduct, and his circumstances. First of

all, about his character. God loved him, and men loved him too; every body that knew him could not help loving him. That was his character. The first thing was, that he had God's love. That is of the utmost importance, dear children; because if everybody in the world loved us, and we had not the love of God, we could not be truly happy. Now, one proof of being accepted of God is, that our conduct will be that which is right. We read that Samuel had the character before men of being a good boy. He "was in favour with men." If Samuel had been accustomed to tell lies, do you think that men would have liked him? But I dare say you would like me to tell you something more particularly respecting Samuel's conduct. 1. In the first place, then, Samuel was very obedient. He was obedient to Eli's will. Eli had only to tell him what to do, and Samuel ran as hard as he could to do it. 2. The second is, respect and affection for an old man. Now, there are not many children that are disposed to find their pleasure in showing respect and affection to old people. Little children very often are inclined to treat old people with neglect—not to show them proper attention. 3. But another thing in Samuel's conduct was his humility. It pleased God to reveal Himself to Samuel. Now, many children would have been puffed up with pride at this. 4. There is one thing more in Samuel's conduct that you ought to notice; and that is his truthfulness. "Samuel told him every whit, and hid not the whole truth from him." When he was examined, he kept nothing back. There was no deceit, no guile, nothing of this kind to spoil his character, or to cause him to lose that favour which he had with all that knew him. But we must say a word about Samuel's circumstances; because perhaps there are some children present who think that he had everything to favour him—that he had no temptations to do wrong. They may think that he had a pious mother, and perhaps a pious father too, and that Eli, with whom he lived, was God's minister, and that he was employed in God's house, and that there were therefore around him circumstances that all tended to make him good. But, if God had not given Samuel a new heart, all these circumstances would not have made him good. But Samuel's circumstances were not all favourable. The two sons of Eli that Samuel had to do with every day were very bad young men. II. **HOW ARE YOU TO BECOME LIKE LITTLE SAMUEL?** I think I ought to ask you, in the first place, whether you wish to become like little Samuel. In order to be like Jesus, to be in "favour with God and men," you must have "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." I have told you that you must pray to be like Jesus: then, secondly, you must pray to remember the truth of your Bibles. "My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep My commandments. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart. So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and men." Now, in order to remember God's Word you must know it—you must learn it. Let me advise you, then, never to let a single day pass without learning some one text of Scripture. The third thing is to go and practise what you know immediately. Our blessed Lord says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (*W. Cadman, M.A.*)

Ver. 27. And there came a man of God unto Eli.—Eli's two messengers:—That was a terrible speech to make to an old man whose life was all behind him, who was now tottering on the last edge! Ministers of God are required to come up to this point of faithfulness, now and again; to have to say these words, terrible as lightning at midnight, right to an old man, when nobody else is there to hear—to thunder to one man—to shake the universe round one poor old man! It is nothing to preach to a crowd. But when the man of God comes and talks to one auditor—and when that auditor feels, by reason of his solitude, that every syllable is meant for him alone—you go far to test the strength of a man's character and the extent of a man's moral capacity. Eli was a priest, the speaker was a man of God. Man first, priest second; life original, office secondary. Eli was high-priest, and the man who confronted him was a man of God. There is something deeper in the human than the sacerdotal. Let us have faith in people, in humanity; not in ephods and mitres and staves of office—but in that divine, living, imperishable spirit which God has put into redeemed and sanctified beings. Surely this message was enough for one day. Who can bear such thunder from the morning even until the evening? The next messenger that came was a little child. This is how God educates us, by putting tutors on both sides, behind and

before. You hear a man who tells you what to you may be evil tidings—sharp, startling messages to your judgment and to your conscience—and you say, "The man is a fanatic." You walk away, and before you have got a mile further a little child gets up and smiles at you the same message—says it in smiles, in tender looks, in trembling child-like tone—and you begin to think there is something in it. You go further, and the atmosphere seems to be charged with Divine reproaches and Divine messages. So you go on, until the oldest, best, and stateliest men tremble under subtle, impalpable, all-encompassing, irresistible influences. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 30. **For them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.**—*The reward of honouring God:*—The words are in the strictest sense the word of God, uttered immediately by God Himself; and may thence command from us an especial attention and regard. I. THE REWARD MAY BE CONSIDERED EITHER ABSOLUTELY, AS WHAT IT IS IN ITSELF; OR RELATIVELY, AS TO ITS RISE, AND WHENCE IT COMES. 1. For itself, it is honour; a thing, if valued according to the rate it bears in the common market, of highest price among all the object of human desire; the chief reward which the greatest actions and which the best actions do pretend unto or are capable of; that which usually bears most sway in the hearts, and hath strongest influence on the lives of men; the desire of obtaining and maintaining which doth commonly overbear other most potent inclinations. The love of pleasure stoops thereto: for men, to get or keep reputation, will decline the most pleasant enjoyments, will embrace the hardest pains. If we observe what is done in the world, we may discern it to be the source of most undertakings therein. For honour the soldier undergoes hardship. In such request, of such force, doth honour appear to be. If we examine why, we may find more than mere fashion to ground the experiment on. There is one obvious reason why no mean regard should be had thereto; its great convenience and usefulness: it being an engine very requisite for the managing of any business, for the compassing any design, at least sweetly and smoothly. But searching farther, we shall find the appetite of honour to have a deeper ground, and that it is rooted even in our nature itself. For we may descry it budding forth in men's first infancy (before the use of reason, or speech); even little children being ambitious to be made much of, maintaining among themselves petty emulations and competitions, as it were about punctilios of honour. It is a spirit that not only haunts our courts and palaces, but frequents our schools and cloisters, yea, creeps into cottages, into hospitals, into prisons, and even dogs men into deserts and solitudes. The reason why is clear: for it is as if one should dispute against eating and drinking, or should labour to free himself from hunger and thirst: the appetite of honour being indeed, as that of food, innate unto us, so as not to be quenched or smothered, except by some violent distemper or indisposition of mind; even by the wise Author of our nature originally implanted therein, for very good ends. For did not some love of honour glow in men's breasts, were that noble spark quite extinct, few men probably would study for honourable qualities, or perform laudable deeds; there would be nothing to keep some men within bounds of modesty and decency. A moderate regard to honour is also commendable as an instance of humanity or good will to men, yea, as an argument of humility, or a sober conceit of ourselves. For to desire another man's esteem, and consequently his love, doth imply somewhat of reciprocal esteem and affection toward him; and to prize the judgment of other men concerning us, doth signify that we are not oversatisfied with our own. But beyond all this, the holy Scripture doth not teach us to slight honour, but rather in its fit order and just measure to love and prize it. It indeed instructs us to ground it well, not on bad qualities or wicked deeds; not on things of a mean and indifferent nature, that is vanity; but on real worth and goodness, that may consist with modesty and sobriety. Such is the reward propounded to us in itself; no vile or contemptible thing, but on various accounts most valuable: that which the common apprehensions of men, plain dictates of reason, a predominant instinct of nature, the judgments of very wise men, and Divine attestation itself conspire to commend unto us as very considerable and precious. Such a reward our text prescribes us the certain, the only way of attaining. 2. Such a benefit is here tendered to us by God Himself: "I," saith He, "will honour." It is sanctified by coming from His holy hand; it is dignified by following His most wise and just disposal; it is fortified and assured by depending

on His unquestionable word and uncontrollable power: who, as He is the prime Author of all good, so He is in especial manner the sovereign dispenser of honour. It is but an exchange of honour for honour; of honour from God, which is a free gift, for honour from us, which is a just duty; of honour from Him our sovereign Lord, for honour from us His poor vassals; of honour from the most high Majesty of heaven, for honour from us vile worms creeping on the earth. Such an overture one would think it not only reasonable to accept, but impossible to refuse. For can any man dare not to honour invincible power, infallible wisdom, inflexible justice? II. THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS OF HONOURING GOD, or several parts and degrees of this duty. 1. The soul of that honour which is required of us toward God, is that internal esteem and reverence which we should bear in our hearts towards Him; importing that we have impressed on our minds such conceptions about Him as are worthy of Him, suitable to the perfection of His nature, to the eminency of His state, to the just quality of His works and actions. In acts, I say: not in speculative opinions concerning the Divine excellencies, such as all men have who are not downright atheists. Such an apprehension of God's power, as shall make us dread His irresistible hand, shall cause us to despair of prospering in bad courses, shall dispose us to confide in Him, as able to perform whatever He wills us to expect from Him. "This people," saith God, "do honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Such honour is indeed no honour at all, but impudent abuse and profane mockery. 2. This bodily part consists in outward expressions and performances, whereby we declare our esteem and reverence of God, and produce or promote the like in others. First, in general, God is honoured by a willing and careful practice of all piety and virtue for conscience sake, or in avowed obedience to His holy will. This is the most natural expression of our reverence toward Him, and the most effectual way of promoting the same in others. The light and lustre of good works done in regard to Divine command, will cause men to see clearly the excellencies of our most wise and gracious Lord; will consequently induce and excite them "to glorify our Father which is in heaven." "In this," saith our Saviour, "is my Father glorified, if you bear much fruit." It is an aggravation of impiety, often insisted on in Scripture, that it slurs, as it were, and defames God, brings reproach and obloquy on Him, causes His name to be profaned; and it is answerably a commendation of piety, that by the practice thereof we beget esteem to God Himself, and sanctify His ever-blessed name. Secondly, but there are, deserving a particular inspection, some members thereof, which in a peculiar and eminent manner do constitute this honour: some acts which more signally conduce to the illustration of God's glory. Such are—1. The frequent and constant performance (in a serious and reverent manner) of all religious duties, or devotions. 2. Using all things peculiarly related unto God, His holy name, His holy word, His holy places (the places "where His honour dwelleth,") His holy times (religious fasts and festivities) with especial respect. 3. Yielding due observance to the deputies and ministers of God. 4. Freely spending what God hath given us (out of respect unto Him) in works of piety, charity, and mercy; that which the wise man calls, "honouring the Lord with our substance." 5. All penitential acts, by which we submit unto God, and humble ourselves before Him. As Achan, by confessing of his sin, is said to "give glory to the Lord God of Israel." 6. Cheerful undergoing afflictions, losses, disgraces, for the profession of God's truth, or for obedience to God's commands. (As St. Peter is said "by his death," suffered on such accounts, "to glorify God.") 7. We shall especially honour God, by discharging faithfully those offices which God has intrusted us with; by improving diligently those talents which God hath committed to us; by using carefully those means and opportunities which God hath vouchsafed us, of doing Him service, and promoting His glory. It is a most notorious thing, both to reason and in experience, what extreme advantage great persons have, especially by the influence of their practice, to bring God Himself, as it were, into credit; how much it is in their power easily to render piety a thing in fashion and at request. For in what they do, they never are alone, or are ill attended: whither they go, they carry the world along with them: they lead crowds of people after them, as well when they go in the right way, as when they run astray. Their good example especially hath this advantage, that men can find no excuse, can have no pretence why they should not follow it. III. I SHOULD NOW SHOW WHY THE DUTY IS REQUIRED OF US, OR HOW REASONABLE IT IS. God surely doth not exact honour

from us because He needs it, because He is the better for it, because He, for itself, delights therein. He is infinitely excellent, beyond what we can imagine or declare. 1. For that to honour God is the most proper work of reason; that for which primarily we were designed and framed; whence the performance thereof doth preserve and perfect our nature; to neglect it being unnatural and monstrous. 2. For that also it is a most pleasant duty. He is not a man who doth not delight to make some returns thither, where He hath found much good will, whence He hath felt great kindness. 3. For that likewise our honouring God disposes us to the imitation of Him (for what we do reverence we would resemble), that is, to the doing those things wherein our chief perfection and happiness consists, whence our best content and joy doth spring. 4. In fine, for that the practice of this duty is most profitable and beneficial to us; unto it by an eternal rule of justice our final welfare and prosperity being annexed. IV. THIS PROMISE HE MAKES GOOD SEVERAL WAYS. 1. The honouring God is of itself an honourable thing; the employment which ennobles heaven itself, wherein the highest angels do rejoice and glory. It is the greatest honour of a servant to bring credit to his master. 2. By honouring God we are immediately instated in great honour; we enter into most noble relations, acquire most illustrious titles, enjoy most glorious privileges. 3. God hath so ordered it, that honour is naturally consequent on the honouring Him. God hath made goodness a noble and stately thing; hath impressed on it that beauty and majesty which commands an universal love and veneration, which strikes presently both a kindly and an awful respect into the minds of all men. 4. God, by His extraordinary providence, as there is reason and occasion, doth interpose so as to procure honour to them, to maintain and further their reputation who honour Him. Many are the instances of persons (such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Job, and Daniel), who, for their signal honouring of God, from a base and obscure, or from an afflicted and forlorn condition, have, in ways strange and wonderful, been advanced to eminent dignity. 5. Whereas men are naturally inclined to bear much regard to the judgment of posterity concerning them, are desirous to leave a good name behind them, and to have their memory retained in esteem: God so disposes things, that "the memory of the just shall be blessed"; that "his righteousness shall be had in everlasting remembrance." 6. Lastly, to those who honour God here, God hath reserved an honour infinitely great and excellent, in comparison whereto all honours here are but dreams, the loudest acclamations of mortal men are but empty sounds. (*I. Barrow, D.D.*) *Divinely approved*:—The principle underlying these words is, that God is jealous of His honour and glory. The great object of God still, in revealing Himself, is to get men to honour Him. When that is accomplished He is satisfied, and men are fulfilling the great end of their existence. I. CONSIDER SOME REASONS WHY GOD SHOULD BE HONOURED. 1. He should be honoured because of His power. It seems almost an instinct in the human mind to honour power. Some of the heathen worshipped the ox and the lion as the symbols of strength. In our own day, in connection with athletic sports, etc., we see what amounts almost to a worship of brute force. But perversions of the idea apart, every well-regulated mind recognises the necessity of honouring those to whom honour is due, and notably those possessed of power. Now consider the power of God. 2. He is to be honoured because of His character. Some would say that men possessed of power, if destitute of character, are not to be honoured. Without discussing this point, it will be admitted on all hands that power and character combined deserve, and will receive, all due honour. Besides this, it is to be observed that God's character is perfect in the combination of the strong with the tender. His power is to be taken along with His goodness, His justice with His love, His holiness with His compassion. So that we have in God perfection in each attribute, and perfection in all taken together. 3. He is to be honoured because of all He is doing both in Providence and grace. II. CONSIDER SOME WAYS IN WHICH GOD CAN AND OUGHT TO BE HONOURED. 1. We are to honour Him by trusting Him. There is nothing more dishonouring to a man of honour and truthfulness, than to doubt or mistrust him. The life of faith, from first to last, is a God-honouring life. 2. We honour God by the services of the Sanctuary, if they are performed in a right spirit. Altogether, if we are in a right frame of mind we are offering spiritual sacrifices to God. 3. We are to honour God with our substance. III. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCE OF HONOURING GOD. It is said in the 75th Psalm, "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge:

He putteth down one and setteth up another." He is the Ruler of the Universe, and, therefore, all honour comes from Him. This truth is also brought out in the history of Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel and many others. IV. CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH GOD ACTS IN THE BESTOWING OF HONOUR.—God honours men, not for their fathers' sake but for their own. In other words, He deals with men not representatively but individually. This principle is brought out also in the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, the gist of which is comprehended in the statement, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." (*D. Macaulay, M.A.*) *Honour and Shame*:—There could not be a more forcible illustration of the truth of these words than the sad story of which they form a part. Outwardly, we see nothing to blame in the personal conduct of Eli. He had never lived above his office. That God had delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifice, he had impressed on himself, and these things were the summit of his estimate. He had never learned that there are things better than sacrifice, and more acceptable than the fat of rams. An amiable heart, a fine conservative feeling for all that was enjoined by God, these had kept him steady and made him respected: but alas it now appears, that there was no more than these. He knew not that in order to do good, a man must live above, not up to his outward duties: that influence on others is found, not where life is raised up to the routine of duty, but where that routine of duty is quickened and inspired by a life led in higher places and guided by nobler motives. He who dwells in the circumference of his life gains no sympathy from those who dwell in its centre. And none are so keen as the young to discover where central principle is wanting; none so ductile, to be drawn after, where another leads. The father reposed in the public esteem. He lived and acted as was expected of him. They knew that their father's piety was just conformity to what he saw around him: was just amiableness, propriety, acquiescence in that which he found among the servants of God in his tabernacle. And when with the passions and feelings of youth, they began to do likewise, they too find what all under the same circumstances have found. The result in this case was natural, and speedily followed. Eli, falling among the decent and the religious, knowing his duties, and having inherited perhaps a feeling of their sacred nature, did what was expected of him: his sons, falling among the unprincipled and profligate, being taught to look on their sacred duties as decent forms merely, did what was expected of them: ran riot with their ungodly companions; being destitute of leading principle, drifted onward from bad to worse; openly disgraced the solemn service of the sanctuary by their greediness and by their sensuality. The sad history ends as God had forewarned them it would—and even more terribly in its details than it had pleased Him to disclose. Most characteristic and instructive is every step of the narration: instructive, as to the effect produced on a people by the long endurance of such a system as that which we have now been tracing. To what must a people have been degraded, who could look on that ark thus accompanied, and greet its arrival with shouts of triumph? And now rapidly gathers in the dark and disgraceful catastrophe. Yes, and it is thus that all glory departs—from men, from families, from nations—by leaving out God from life, and lightly esteeming Him. Turn for an instant to another example, of a very different kind, and notice the contrast. There never was a religious man, who gave more lamentable instances of forgetting his God and falling into sin, than did David. But when David fell, he rose again. He never indeed lost the clinging consequences of his sin; it ruined his peace, it broke up his family, it embittered his death-bed; but it did not overwhelm him utterly. And why? Because he set the Lord ever before him, in the realities of his inward life. And therefore the one was honoured, and the other was disgraced. And now from these ancient examples, written down for our learning, let us turn to ourselves and fit them to our instruction. These are days of all but universal external accord in the great verities of our Christian faith. It is rather creditable than otherwise to maintain them: it is what society expects of men and of families, to conform to a certain amount of religious duty. And the consequence is, that such a history as this needs applying, and its lessons enforcing on men's minds, more perhaps than at any previous period. There is among us, it is to be feared, a vast amount of this same untoward and blameless decency, this uniform respect for the usages and ordinances of religion, subsisting without a living personal apprehension of and honour of God in the character in which He has revealed himself, and in which we profess to have received and to be serving Him. Let us set before ourselves the consequences of

such a state in the individual, in the family, in the community. Do we not at once see, that it contains of necessity the elements of decay and of downward progress? And corresponding to this progress will be, as we might expect, yet another, and in another direction. As Israel became acted on by the system which prevailed under Eli, superstition succeeded to the fear of God. Now superstition is the refuge of the conscience when it has lost the sense of God's personal presence. You may measure by its prevalence, the absence of God from men's hearts. And another result will not fail to follow, from the mere decent conservation of religion among a people: a depreciation of Truth, as truth: a refusal to entertain solemn questions reaching to our very truthfulness and genuineness as men and Christians, and falling back on expediency as a principle. I might point out many more mischiefs resulting from such a view of religion as that which I have been to-day impugning. I might follow the young, as its result, not only into superstition, which I have done—but into even darker and more awful consequences: I might show how much of the lax belief and growing unbelief of our day is owing to this want of living reality in our religious men and religious families: but I rather hasten to what I conceive ought to be our great practical lesson from this awful history and subject. And that practical lesson is beyond all question this: that the inward reality of religion is the one thing needful, far, far above those outward expressions of it which however necessary as its accompaniments, may and often do exist without it. "Them that honour me I will honour." (*H. Alford, B.D.*) *Man honouring God and God honouring man.* "Them that honour Me I will honour" (1 Samuel. ii. 30.) I. MAN HONOURING GOD AS A DUTY. How can man honour God? Not by making Him greater than He is. He is infinitely glorious. Not by ascribing to Him, in song or prayer and in sublimest forms of speech, the highest attribute of being. How then? 1. By a practical reverence for His greatness. His greatness should be realised in every step of life. The world is the house of God and the gate of heaven. Life should be reverent, not frivolous. 2. By a practical gratitude for His goodness. 3. By a practical adoration for His excellence. The heavens declare His glory, yea, the whole earth is full of His glory. II. GOD HONOURING MAN AS A REWARD. "Them that honour Me I will honour." How does God honour such a man? 1. With a commission in His service. He gives him work to do and qualification for its discharge. 2. With an adoption into His family. 3. With a participation in His glory. "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." (*Homilist.*) *The duty and reward of honouring God*:—It is abundantly evident that God is eminently worthy of the highest honour. I. THERE ARE SPECIAL FORMS IN WHICH IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES WE MAY BE CALLED UPON TO HONOUR GOD. These are various as the changing nature of our lot in Providence, and the characteristics of the age and place in which we live. But there are common forms of honouring Him which are incumbent upon all who are blessed with gospel privileges. 1. As rebellious lost and ruined creatures, it is a primary and fundamental duty that we honour God by obeying His command, to believe on His Son whom He hath sent as the Saviour of mankind sinners. 2. Another important way of honouring God is by having a strict regard to the ordinances of His worship. And we honour Him in a special manner by strictly observing, and carefully conserving, and earnestly defending any of these ordinances, which for the time may be corrupted or neglected or denied. Those thus honour Him, for example, who "keep the Sabbath from polluting it" in a time such as this when Sabbath desecration in a variety of open and flagrant forms so generally and lamentably prevails. 3. God is also honoured in our holding fast and holding forth His revealed truths, especially those which are being ignored, made light of, corrupted, or denied. II. IT IS AN ENCOURAGING AND ANIMATING ASSURANCE THAT IN PROPORTION AS WE IN THESE AND THE LIKE WAYS HONOUR GOD, HE WILL HONOUR US. 1. God sometimes honours those who honour Him in the honour they receive during their lives from their fellowmen. He so deals with them in His providence as to mark them out as those whom He delights to honour. Many instances of this are found not only in Scripture, but in every-day life, as in the following case. There was a large mercantile firm whose annual stock-taking was done on Sabbath. Mr. C—, a superior clerk in their establishment, had, without scruple, always taken a principal part in this work. Having become savingly impressed with Divine things, he felt, when the first annual stock-taking thereafter came round, that he could not again dishonour God by engaging in his secular calling on the Sabbath, whatever might be the consequences of his refusal.

He therefore respectfully but firmly informed his employers that he could not again take part in the usual Sabbath stock-taking. The Saturday came, and he was finally asked whether or not he would be at his accustomed post on the morrow. He firmly declined being present, and received the ominous answer that a letter from the firm would be sent to his home in the evening. Late at night the letter came. Too excited and nervous to do so himself, he asked his sister to open it and read. It began, as he expected, viz., that in consequence of his refusal to perform accustomed duties his employers discharged him from their service; but the letter continued, "we so exceedingly admire your firm, straightforward conscientiousness, and feel so strongly that we can place implicit confidence in you, that we offer you a partnership in our firm, and feel sure that your presence with us will be a blessing." The following stock-taking, we may add, was left in Mr. C——'s hands, under whose arrangements it was satisfactorily done without encroaching on the Sabbath. And never again was the sacred day desecrated in the firm in which he had become so valued a partner. 2. Again, God sometimes honours those who honour Him in the esteem in which they are held by after generation. "The memory of the just is blessed." This is abundantly illustrated in Sacred and Church history. It is seen in the honourable repute in which the Patriarchs and Prophets and Apostles are held wherever the inspired writings are read and received. It is seen in the admiration felt throughout Protestant Christendom for the great leaders of the Reformation, as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Wickliffe, Cranmer, and Knox. It is seen in the esteem in which Knox, and Melville, and Henderson are held throughout the Presbyterian world. It is seen on a smaller scale in the honour which, in Scotland at least, attaches to the memory of the Erskines and other Fathers of the Secession, to the memory of Dr. M'Crie, the historian of the Scottish Reformation and Reformers, and to the memory of Chalmers, and other founders of the Free Church, and to the memory of many others who readily suggest themselves. 3. Again, God sometimes honours in their posterity those who honour Him. More than two hundred years ago, the Marquis of Argyle was beheaded in Edinburgh, nominally for the crime of high treason, but in reality for his eminent honouring of God as a pious Christian, a staunch Presbyterian, and a devoted Covenanter. And is it not noteworthy, as illustrative of our theme, that the Argyle family, whilst still Presbyterian, has long occupied a foremost place amongst the Scottish nobility, for talent and character and influence, and that one of his lineal descendants—the present Marquis of Lorne—has been honoured to become son-in-law to our Queen? We may give another and similar recent illustration. The celebrated John Welsh, minister of Ayr, and son-in-law to the illustrious Reformer Knox, was condemned to death as a traitor, for his firm and uncompromising opposition to the Erastian and Prelatic encroachment of King James the Sixth upon the Scottish Church. This sentence was commuted to one of perpetual exile from his native land. The unfeeling and brutal treatment given to his wife—the daughter of Knox—by that vain monarch, when she sought some remission of this punishment to save her husband's life, is well known to every reader of Scottish Church History. And what do we now find with regard to their posterity? The Royal House of Stuart has long since been banished from the throne of Great Britain. And, according to the Boston Advertiser, the Honourable John Welsh, who last month arrived in this country as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to the British Court, is a lineal descendant of that very Welsh, minister of Ayr, who, for fidelity to the King of Zion, was unjustly condemned for treason against his earthly king. But whether those who honour God be honoured in such respects as we have referred to or not, they are and ever will be honoured by God Himself. They have His present approbation and esteem, both in and for honouring Him. And the converse of all this is equally true. Those who despise God—who despise Him by slighting or rejecting His offers of Himself in the gospel to be their God in Christ—who despise Him by neglecting or corrupting the ordinances of His worship—who despise Him by making light of, or parting with, or rejecting any of His revealed truths—"shall be lightly esteemed." They shall be so necessarily, for there can be no true and lasting honour apart from moral excellence. Those who despise God are held in light esteem by those whose esteem is most worth having. They are at heart often despised even by wicked men, who for selfish purposes may fawn upon and flatter them in their outward prosperity. Their posterity often lose any outward honour inherited from them, and become otherwise dishonoured. "The seed of evildoers

shall never be renowned." But whether those who despise God be much or little esteemed by their fellowmen, God Himself holds them in light esteem. All the plaudits, and honours, and rewards which the world can heap upon them cannot counterbalance this. "He that sits in heaven shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision." (*Original Secession Magazine.*) *The road to honour*:—Our chickens generally come home to roost. Our thoughts of other men become other men's thoughts of us. According as we measure out to our fellows, so do they measure back into our bosoms, for good or for evil. So especially, in reference to the Lord himself, the God of justice sooner or later causes a man to reap his own sowing, and gather his own scattering. So does life repeat itself; so does the seed develop the flower, and the flower again produce the seed. It is an endless chain; for the thing that has been is the thing which shall be. A man may live to see a grim procession of all his old sins marching past him, robed in the sackcloth and ashes wherein justice dooms them to be arrayed. So is it also with our joys. God gives us joy after the similitude of our service. If you wish to see this exemplified in Scripture, how many instances rise before you! Enoch walks with God because God pleases him, and then we find that he pleases God. Noah obediently rests the issues of his life upon the truth of God, and God gives him rest. Abraham was famous for trusting God, and it is wonderful how God trusted him. Very striking as an instance of the retaliation of providence is the case of Adoni-bezek. Samuel, when he smote Agag, told him that, as his sword had made women childless, so should the sword of the Lord that day make his mother childless by slaying him. Most memorable of all is the instance of Haman and his gallows, fifty cubits high. See how he swings thereon. He built the gibbet for Mordecai. Malice uses a sort of providential boomerang. The man flings it with all his force at the foe, and it comes back to him; not into his hand that he may use it again, but across his brow to smite him even to the dust. Take heed what ye put into the measure that ye mete out to others, and especially to God; for "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." I. THE DUTY INCUMBENT UPON US ALL, but especially upon God's people, of HONOURING THE LORD. As we are God's creatures we are bound to honour God. Just notice how we ought to honour Him, and consider wherein this duty lies. 1. We should honour Him by confessing his deity: I mean the deity of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. "The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods but one God." 2. Let us further honour God by acknowledging His rule. 3. Let us honour the holiness of God and the justice of God and the mercy of God by repentance whenever we feel that we have done wrong. 4. I would press upon you to honour God by acknowledging the wisdom of His teaching, and by a teachableness which accepts His doctrine. 5. We honour God when we believe Holy Scripture to be inspired—infallibly inspired; and, taking it as such, say, "It is not mine to question it, or to argue against it, but simply to accept it." 6. Further, we honour God's love by a daily trust in him. 7. We also honour God, when we confess His goodness by patiently enduring His will, and especially by rejoicing in it. II. THE INFLUENCE UPON OUR DAILY LIFE OF THIS HABIT OF HONOURING GOD. A man who honours God does this practically; it is no form or farce with him, but a deep practical reality. 1. He does it often by consulting with God. 2. We honour God in our daily life when we confess him. 3. Sometimes you can honour Christ by some distinct service that you can do for him, or by some special obedience to his will. I have always admired the example of the pious Jew who was told that a certain city on the Continent would excellently suit his business. "But," he asked, "is there a synagogue there?" and when they said that there was no synagogue he preferred to stay in another place, that he might worship God, though he would do less business. I do not know that this is often the case among Jews any more than it is among Gentiles; and, I am sorry to say that I know many Gentiles to whom God's worship is no consideration whatever—they would go to the bottomless pit if they could make large profits. 4. Then you can honour God with your substance when He gives it to you. 5. In a word, the man that really honours God seeks to praise Him. III. THE REWARD OF ALL THIS. "Them that honour me I will honour." Is not this a grand reward? It is not, "They that honour me shall be honoured," but, "Them that honour me I will honour." Does God honour men? He promises to do so. Compared with the honour which the Lord is able to give, there is no honour which is worth naming

in the same day. When God honours a man the glory is glory indeed. One of the French kings gave to a conquering general some £500 a year, or thereabouts, for a wonderful deed of prowess, but the soldier told the king that he would have preferred the gold cross. I do not think I should have had such preference for a bauble; but honour is a precious commodity. To get honour from God is very different from getting it from a king. It was said of Alexander that, of two nobles who had served him well, he gave to one ten thousand talents, and to the other a kiss; and he that had the money envied him who received the kiss. One kiss from the mouth of God would outweigh kingdoms. Honour from God—favour from God—this is a high reward, which cannot be weighed against ten thousand worlds, and all the glory thereof. "Them that honour me I will honour." The man who honours God shall be honoured in his own heart by peace of conscience—honoured in his own spirit by the conviction that it must be wisdom to be right and true and honest, and that it can never be under any circumstances right to do wrong, or wise to break a divine command. Such a man honouring his God among his brethren shall be honoured of God in the church. And in the world it shall be the same. I do not believe that a man truly serves God without in the long run winning the esteem of his fellow-citizens. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The right way of honouring God*:—These words were spoken by a prophet of the Lord to Eli, upon occasion of the wickedness of his sons, and the dishonour brought upon religion thereby. 1. That their sins were of a scandalous nature, being an open affront both to the ceremonial and moral law. The offering of the Lord was that which Himself had appointed in the Law of Moses (Lev. vii. 31, v. 33, 34.) But these sons of Eli thought themselves too great to be tied up to such a strict observance of the niceties of the law. God will and ought to be served in his own way, and they, who thought to be wiser than his laws, smarted for their folly. 2. That the house of Eli was advanced to that dignity which it then enjoyed by an extraordinary method of providence. 3. That although God was justly provoked by the sins of the house of Eli; yet there was a concurrence of the people's sins in bringing down such severe judgments. I. THE NAME OF THAT HONOUR WHICH IS DUE TO GOD. II. The rules and measures whereby God bestows honour on mankind. "Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me," &c. There are three sorts of men to be considered with respect to the honour due to God. 1. There are such as despise him instead of honouring him. Such as the sons of Eli here mentioned, who are said to be the sons of Belial, who knew not the Lord. 2. There are such who pretend to honour God, but do not. He that would give true honour to another must have a just apprehension of his worth and excellency, and give it in such a manner as is most becoming and agreeable to him. Now, there are two ways whereby men may be guilty of dishonouring God under a pretence of honouring him. 1. By false notions of God in their minds, when persons form in their minds false imaginations or conceptions of him; and so give their worship not to the true God, but to an idol of their own fancy. And when our minds are fixed herein, the next thing is to exclude all mean and unworthy thoughts of him, as inconsistent with his Divine perfections. 2. Men dishonour God, when they pretend to honour him, not according to His will, but their own intentions and imaginations. 3. But certainly there is a way left to give to God that honour which is due to Him. What are the most likely means to be effectual—1. An universal discountenancing of all sorts of vice and profaneness, be the persons of what rank or quality soever. 2. An even, steady, vigorous and impartial execution of the laws against looseness and debauchery. 3. A wise choice of fit instruments to pursue so good an end. 4. Lastly, a diligent inspection into the behaviour of those who are the proper and immediate instruments for carrying on so good a design. II. THE RULES AND MEASURES WHICH GOD OBSERVES IN DISTRIBUTING HONOUR AMONG MEN. "Them that honour Me, I will honour; but they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." Which may be understood two ways. 1. As to such societies of men, which have one common interest. And so it implies, that the welfare and flourishing condition of such depends upon their zeal and concernment for God and religion. God takes care of His own honour by methods we are not able to comprehend. And if we cannot know the number and aggravation of a people's sins we can never fix the measures and degrees of their punishment. But, however, some things are certain; 1. That the sins of a nation do naturally tend to the weakness and dishonour of it. 2. Sometimes God steps out of his ordinary method and course of Providence, either in a way of judgment or

mercy. And then he more particularly shows that those that honour him, he will honour; and those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed. 2. As to particular persons, how far this holds will appear by these things. 1. That esteem and honour naturally follows the opinion of another's desert or excellency. 2. The sincere practice of piety and virtue doth command esteem and reverence. (*Bishop Stillingfleet.*) *God honouring the righteous*.—I. THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHOULD HONOUR GOD. 1. By putting his trust implicitly in God's words of promise. 2. The righteous man honours God by cleaving fast unto the Lord when the world is all against him. 3. Another way in which the righteous man honours God is by his ceaseless activity and enlarged benevolence. 4. By his singleness of eye, and his faithfulness unto death. II. How GOD HONOURS THE RIGHTEOUS. God honours his saints who commit their souls to his keeping for pardon and reconciliation, by bestowing that peace which passes all understanding. (*T. Myers, M.A.*) *Honour from God*.—The desire of honour, credit, reputation, soon arises in us, because the usefulness of it soon appears to us, for, as we live in society and continually converse with others, and stand in need of them, we see how necessary it is that others should think and speak well of us. The desire of honour which is common to us all is very profitable to society, of singular use to keep men in order, to deter them from wickedness, and to excite them to many virtues. The sacred writers have also represented honour as desirable, and in some measure worthy to be sought and loved. 1. LET US EXPLAIN WHAT IT IS TO HONOUR GOD. To honour God is to frame to ourselves just and worthy notions of Him, of His perfections, of His power, wisdom, justice, goodness and mercy, to reflect upon them with pleasure and respect, to love Him, to trust in Him, to desire to resemble Him as nearly as our nature permits, and in all things to consult His will as the rule of our life. To honour God is to declare openly before men by our behaviour that we reverence Him, and would choose above all things to approve ourselves to Him. To honour God is to be constant in the performance of all public acts of religion. To honour God is to improve our abilities, and to discharge the duties of our station in a manner which shall procure respect to the religion which we profess. II. We have seen what it is to honour God, and hence we may know WHAT, ON THE CONTRARY, IS MEANT BY DISHONOURING HIM. God is dishonoured, in general, by all kinds of moral evil, which is a contempt of His authority, an abuse of His gifts, and a disobedience to His will. But more particularly: God is dishonoured by atheism and unbelief. God is dishonoured by that kind of idolatry, in which, instead of him, many false gods are worshipped. God is dishonoured by those who reject the Gospel of Christ. Amongst those who profess the Christian religion, God is dishonoured by such as live not suitably to it. III. Let us now proceed to consider THE REWARD PROMISED TO THOSE WHO HONOUR GOD. By the honour thus promised to the righteous, the same thing is not altogether meant in the Old Testament, and in the New; for, because under the Law future rewards were not so clearly propounded, the honour there mentioned relates principally to this world, though honour in the world to come is not excluded: on the contrary, in the New Testament, where eternal life is more fully taught, the honour promised relates principally to that honour which the good shall hereafter receive, though honour even for the present is not to be excluded. The promise, therefore, contained in the text may be fairly restrained and reduced to this, that the good shall be rewarded with honour, usually in this world, and certainly in the world to come. Honour is not to be obtained by those who do nothing to deserve it. All the gifts which this world can bestow upon us will not secure it. A good person will always be useful to society, as far as his station and abilities permit: he will not despise and wrong others, and he will do them all the services that lie in his power. So far, therefore, as he is known, he will probably be esteemed. Thus respect and honour is the natural consequence of goodness, and in the common course of things must attend it. But there is, over and above all this, a promise of God that it shall be so, and we must not suppose that He leaves the issues of things altogether to second causes, and never interposeth Himself. In the Scriptures of the Old Testament we find in how extraordinary a manner God honoured those who honoured Him. If we descend to the times when piety most flourished, and yet was attended with the fewest temporal recompenses, to the first age of Christianity, we find that the disciples of Christ, and other eminent persons in the church, though persecuted, scorned, and slandered by the Gentiles, and the unbelieving Jews, received great authority and miraculous powers from God, and the

utmost duty, love, and respect from their numerous brethren in the faith. (*J. Jortin, M.A.*) *The service of God the only true dignity:—I. WHAT IT IS TO HONOUR GOD.* I need not, I trust, use many words to show you the sole supremacy of the God of heaven and earth. In order to honour this great Being aright, He requires that we love Him with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind—that we entertain towards Him, supreme reverence and affection, that, whatsoever we do, we do it to His glory. To honour God then as a sinner, you must first do homage to His Son as a Saviour. **II. TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROMISE AND THE THREATENING IN THE TEXT.** Many and great are the blessings promised in the Scriptures of truth, to the righteous, to them that fear God. Of all the subordinate principles of action in the human breast, there is perhaps none of more universal influence or of more powerful efficacy than the desire of honour. There is no class of men so high as to despise it, and none so low as to be incapable of feeling it. Princes and nobles, statesmen and warriors, lawyers and merchants, philosophers and poets, peasants and mechanics, are all sensible of its influence. To obtain it they will submit to the heaviest toils, the greatest risks, the severest hardships, the most wasting anxieties, and the most alarming dangers. Under its influence have the most formidable obstacles been surmounted, and the greatest results effected. A principle, then, so universal and so powerful, may justly be considered a principle of our original constitution, and intended to serve the most important and beneficial purposes; and yet it is not to be concealed, that being directed to foolish, vain, unsatisfactory, and forbidden objects, it has been productive of dissatisfaction, disappointment, and bitter remorse to him who was actuated by it, as well as gross injustice, cruelty, and oppression to others. To gratify it, strange as it may seem, many have been guilty of the most contemptible meanness. Though a principle of our nature, then, and capable of producing the most extensive results, it is plain that before these results can be beneficial or allowable, as means of acquiring honour, they must be such as the laws of God, the principles of justice, truth, and goodness will allow; hence God says, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches," &c. If you seek, then, the honour that cometh from God in those pursuits which are agreeable to righteousness, truth, and mercy, which alone reason and conscience can commend, which promote the glory of Him who is all in all, the good of mankind, and the salvation and happiness of your own immortal souls, then assuredly it is a lawful, and proper, and dignified, principle of action. But if the honour that cometh from God be the object of your desire, and pursued in the way we have pointed out, you cannot be disappointed. The word of the living God is thus passed that if you honour Him, in other words devote yourselves to a life of faith and holiness, He will honour you. And He who is God over all, almighty in His power, and infinite in His resources, cannot want the means of fulfilling His promise—"Riches and honour come of Him, for he ruleth over all: in his hand is power and might: in his hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." It is considered an honour to be made associates of the illustrious great, and men covet, even to a weakness, to be thought persons of illustrious extraction and rank; now God promotes those who honour Him to the rank of His children, makes them "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The Almighty so arranges His providence that at the last, and often in this world, the character of the righteous is duly appreciated. "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." While there is nothing that men, especially the young, desire so much as honour, there is nothing they so much dread as disgrace and contempt—but this shall infallibly be the portion of all who neglect or despise God. But is it possible, we would ask, to despise God? (*J. Gibson, M.A.*) *Honouring God:—That though it is in the power of every man, more or less, as well as it is his duty, to honour God by his words and actions; yet that this more especially belongs to those that are in a more eminent station, and have greater advantages and opportunities for doing good than others, by their authority, power, and example. I. I SHALL TREAT OF THE WORDS BY THEMSELVES.* "Them that honour me, I will honour." The honour due to Almighty God is founded upon the same reason as His Being. For who can consider the wonderful power and wisdom shining through the works of the visible creation. Who can contemplate His goodness and His mercy, His mercy to the world. Who can consider God's government of the world, and His constant preservation of mankind? Who that considers the equity and perfection of the divine law? Who can reflect upon the preservation of a church? Lastly, who is there that has made any observation of himself, and looked into the circumstances of his life in the various scenes of it,

but must own a cause superior to himself, and his obligations to this Almighty Power? Surely there is no need of any other argument than the nature of the thing to induce us to honour our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. 1. Religion and the civil interest are closely connected. It was strictly so among the Jews, whose government was a theocracy. And the law of the land being then of God's own institution, there was a peculiar providence and blessing that was connected to their obedience by a Divine promise: And by this they were eminently distinguished from other nations. But though it was thus with them after an especial manner, yet the whole world always was, and ever will be, under the government of God's providence. And howsoever the providence of God may vary in its motions, now turning itself this way, and then another; yet there are immovable reasons upon which it always proceeds, and that is religion, and the blessing of God; our honouring of him, and His honouring of us, in conjunction and co-operation. For religion will stand to the world's end, whatever become of particular persons and governments. While mortals engage with mortals only, there is the like force to defend, as to assault, and the success depends upon the greater numbers, the inbred courage of the soldiery, the conduct of the commander, or some fortunate accident; but now when the Divine providence comes to be concerned, it is not what the number, or the courage, or the conduct, nay or accidents, are on the adverse side: because that's all in itself, and becomes all wherever it is. And there it will be, where the honour of God and religion is concerned. There is a vast difference between what is done by Divine providence for our own sakes, and what for the sake of others. If for our own sakes, as it is when grounded upon religion, and the honour we pay to Almighty God, it will then continue, and last as long as the reason lasts upon which it stands. But if it be for other reasons that we succeed in a design, and not for our own sakes, then when the reasons cease our assistance that we had from the Divine providence ceases with it. Thus it was with the haughty Assyrian, who prospered in his invasion of Judea, not as he himself thought, by the wisdom of his own counsel, but as he was the rod of God's anger, and sent by his special commission against the hypocritical nation. But that service ended, there was a stop put to his victory, and he soon fell under the like calamity (Isa. x. 5, &c.) The world is then as the Jewish state was, a kind of theocracy, God is the governor, and religion, as it were, the soul of it: And then it is that God becomes their patron, and His providence their security. 2. As these two are thus to be connected, for religion is to have the preference: "Them that honour me, I will honour." Second causes have this advantage of the first, that they are visible, and so sooner affect us than the Supreme, who is invisible; and therefore mankind have been inclined to direct their endeavours another way. But this is an unpardonable oversight, to begin thus at the wrong end; as if because an artificer uses a pencil and colours in the various figures which he draws, and sets off by his skill to the greatest advantage; that a person should impute all to the instruments the artist uses and applaud their skill, and apply himself to them as the operator, and pass by the painter. Much so do they that apply themselves to the next causes, and to the means to the neglect of Him who is the Supreme Cause. Prayer is somewhere due, for we receive what we cannot of ourselves procure; we live as well as we begin to be, by the like Power; and if we enter upon our affairs under the influence only of our own wisdom and power, we may as well pray to ourselves, as depend upon ourselves; since where our dependence is there are our devotions due. But how ridiculous would he appear that should thus adore himself, and pray to himself? 3. According to the honour we give to God, and the regard shown to religion, we may expect to be honoured by him; such we may expect the event will be. It is an easy thing to conceive that such the event will be, forasmuch as God governs the world, and when we lay things in their proper order there is no reason to think but that prosperity, honour, and success should attend those that honour God, as heat and light do the sun. And yet if we draw near, and view the case as it is often in fact, we shall find it far different from what it is in speculation. If, indeed, this was constantly so, that those that honour God were always honoured by Him with such peculiar marks of favour as distinguished them from others, it would serve as a character by which the good might be known from the bad. But since nothing is more evident from common experience than that all things, generally speaking, come alike to all, then those that do not honour God may fare alike with such as do, and those that do honour Him fare no better than those that do not; and so the force of the argument in the text will be lost. But

setting aside, for the present, what may be said in defence of the method of Divine providence in such a seeming promiscuous dispensation of things and the reconcileableness of the proposition in the text to it, as to particular persons, we are to remember what has been already said, that it is more especially to be applied to such persons that are of eminent character in respect of quality, or office, or for the advantages they have and improve to the honour of God, and promoting of religion. And surely such as these will God more especially regard. But if we raise the argument higher, and apply it to nations and communities, it improves in our hands, and we have a noble instance of this truth. It must be granted that God that has a regard to the flowers of the field, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the earth, is as much more concerned in the good, preservation, and happiness of mankind, as these in their nature exceed the other; but yet because we see not into all the events and circumstances relating to men in this world, and that there is a reserve for them in another, we cannot so settle what relates to them, but that we are forced to suspend, and must acknowledge there are great difficulties, and that must remain so to be, till the whole comes to be disclosed. But now as to men combined together in societies, the case is not so perplexed, for there we may, generally speaking, observe, and perhaps, if a careful history of acts and events were preserved, it would appear that God doth honour those nations which honour Him, and that there is no people among whom, as well by their practice as laws, virtue, and religion have been, and are encouraged, but has a suitable blessing attending it, and the Divine providence eminently appearing in their behalf. There are some vices that in their own nature and apparent consequences root up families, make nations effeminate, and poor-spirited, and render them an easy prey to the bold invader: As was evident in the declining times of the Roman empire, declining in virtue as well as power, and declining in power, because they declined in virtue. But there are other sins that have as bearing an influence in the judgments that befall a nation, and especially a nation in covenant with God, as a church, that deprives them of their best defence, the protection of God, and exposes them to the worst of dangers; and these sins are a profane contempt or neglect of things sacred. II. TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSITION IN THE TEXT, WITH RELATION TO THE CONTEXT, and to the matter of fact it is subjoined to. Eli being invested with the supreme power and authority, had an opportunity for doing the greatest good, for reformatory matters in Church and State, and settling them upon a sure and lasting foundation. In which, how happily soever he succeeded for a time, and so as to have the former part of the text verified in him, "Them that honour me, I will honour"; yet afterwards there followed so great disorders, through the evil practices of his sons, and his indulgence to them, that drew upon him a severe train of judgments. And can such persons whom God hath blessed with gifts and talents above others, or raised by His providence to a state of eminence, think that there is no more required of them in their public station than if they drowned away their time in some obscure corner, alike unknown and unprofitable to the world? (Luke xii. 48.) (*John Williams, D.D.*) *Honouring God*:—First, here is honour residing in God. Secondly, I will honour; that is, honour communicated and diffused from God. Thirdly, honour for honour, a covenant established to the advancement of our glory, if we glorify God. Let the honour due unto God have the first place. If we were enjoined to magnify and worship that which was base and despicable, like gods of silver and gold, then cause might be shown why flesh and blood should disdain it. It is the King of Kings, and the excellency of Jacob; He sits upon a throne that is circled about with a rainbow (Rev. iv.) I know it will be more profitable to instance particulars of honour and worship, wherein God especially is delighted. 1. We must magnify His name. 2. Obey His word and commandments. 3. We must give reverence to His sacraments, as to the seals of His love and mercy. 4. Obey His magistrates. Let me declare this blessing of God in particulars. The life of man is divided into three ages. First, here is our conversation upon earth, whose honours we call political promotions, but the days of this life are few and evil, and the honours are as short. The second life is the voice of fame when we are dead, according as we live in the good report of men, or be quite forgotten. And the last life is the life of glory. Thus you see God hath dispersed his blessing of honours: 1. In title and pre-eminence; 2. In a blessed memory; 3. In a crown of glory. This I have spoken for the first share of honour which God giveth in this life, and that for these two ends: First, to promote the public good; secondly, to be depressed in humility. But you will

say, wherewith shall we honour God? With the heart, by desiring Him; with the mouth, by confessing Him; with the hand, with the plenty of your substance by enriching God's portion. "They that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." Which words will best bear this division of two parts. 1. Here is a disdain much undeserved that God should be despised in the opinion of men. 2. Here is a scorn and disdain justly deserved, such a man set at nought in the eyes of God. The first sign of despising is we condemn that which we neglect to understand, as when a prudent man will not beat his brains to study curious and unlawful arts, it is manifest he doth despise them; so, whomsoever thou art, that art not painful to understand the sum of thy faith, and the mystery of thy salvation, it must be granted, that thou setst it at no price and estimation. Secondly, those things which we despise we put out of mind and easily forget, forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. Thirdly, contempt is seen in not to take it to heart, not to be wounded with compassion when Sion is wasted, and God's honour is trampled under feet. Harken now to the fourth sign of scorn and contempt, which consists in this, to speak ill of those things who are precious to God and of high esteem. Fifthly, to step into the observation of a judicious commentator, it is an apparent disgust of contempt; not to tremble at his anger that threatens. Sixthly, to take another arrow out of the same quiver, it is a sign we undervalue the power of another, not to fly to His help when we had need of relief. Seventhly, let me borrow but the speech of the angry goddess, when she thought she should be condemned; that is, when sacrifice comes not in plentifully to the altar, it is an indignity second to none, and God doth greatly disdain at it. 1. The order of these parts will insinuate it unto us; for promise doth go before minacie, the affection of love before the destruction of anger. Them that honour Me I will honour. God begins at the end where there is a reward in the right hand. 2. God will honour the good, He takes it upon Him, that benediction is His proper act. Where is the advancement of the proud? Where is there honour that would be noble, and yet tush at the true nobility of virtue and religion. (*Bishop Hackett.*)

Vers. 31—34. **I will cut off thine arm.**—*Judgment upon a false priesthood*:—"As a priest or interpreter of the holy is the noblest and highest of all men, so is a sham priest the falsest and basest; neither is it doubtful that his canonicals, were they the Pope's tiaras, will be torn from him one day to make bandages for the wounds of mankind, or even to burn into tinder for honest scientific or culinary purposes." (*T. Carlyle.*)

Ver. 33. **In the flower of their age.**—*Premature death consequent upon parental neglect*:—Now it is too evident to require proof, that the sin, of which Eli was guilty, naturally tends to produce the consequence which is here threatened as a punishment. When youth are permitted to make themselves vile, without restraint, they almost inevitably fall into courses which tend to undermine their constitutions, and shorten their days. It is, indeed, a well known fact that, in populous towns, comparatively few live to become aged, and that a much larger proportion of mankind, especially of the male sex who are most exposed to the influence of temptation, die in the flower or meridian of their days, than in the country where parental discipline is less generally neglected, and youth are under greater restraints. If parents wished that their sons should drag out a short life of debility and disease, and die before they reach half the common age of man, they could not adopt measures better calculated to produce this effect, than to cast loose the reins of parental authority, and suffer them to follow their own inclinations, and associate with vicious companions without restraint. We may, therefore, consider the premature death of ungoverned children, as the natural consequence, as well as the usual punishment, of parental neglect. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

Ver. 35. **And I will raise me up a faithful priest.**—*Rejection and election*:—I. THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE REJECTION IS ALWAYS THE SAME. 1. There is nothing arbitrary in God's dealings with men. (1) They seem so to us—(2) Only because we are ignorant of many of the facts with which He is acquainted. (3) If we know the whole, we should see how entirely all His doings are referable to His eternal love and wisdom. (4) We must never therefore justify God's dealings by mere appeals to His power, to His right to do as

He pleases, as though His pleasure could ever be at variance with the dictates of infinite love and perfect wisdom. 2. The real cause of rejection is always found in the enmity against God in the natural man. And this enmity shows itself in self-will. "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (ver. 30). (1) So it was in Saul: "Hath the Lord as much pleasure in burnt offerings and in sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" (2) So in the sons of Eli. They did not love God's will or way. (3) The most awful example in Judas. II. GOD WILL NOT HAVE HIS WORK NEGLECTED ON ACCOUNT OF OUR UNFAITHFULNESS. "I will raise up a faithful priest" (ver. 35). In the Old Testament, Samuel came into the place of Eli's family. In the New Testament, Matthias came into the place of Judas. Note here, in conclusion, two separate lessons. 1. To those who refuse God's work. They will be rejected, but the work will not be left undone. 2. To those who offer themselves to that work in sincerity and devotion. What is their course? (1) Fidelity: "a faithful priest." (2) Sympathy with the purposes of God: "Do according to that which is in mine heart." (3) The protection and blessing of God: "I will build him a sure house." (4) Endurance: "He shall walk before mine anointed for ever." (W. R. Clark, M.A.) **He shall walk before Mine anointed for ever.—Holiness becometh God's Minister:**—"As precious liquors are best kept in clean vessels, so is the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." Who, indeed, would knowingly pour a choice wine into a tainted cask? It would be no instance of his wisdom if he did so. When we hear of men living in sin and yet claiming to be the ministers of God, we are disgusted with their pretences, but we are not deceived by their professions. In the same manner, we care little for those who are orthodox Christians in creed if it is clear that they are heterodox in life. He who believes the truth should himself be true. How can we expect others to receive our religion if it leaves us foul, false, malicious, and selfish? We sicken at the sight of a dirty dish, and refuse even good meat when it is placed thereon. So pure and holy is the doctrine of the cross that he who hears it aright will have his ear cleansed, he who believes it will have his heart purged, and he who preaches it should have his tongue purified. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1—10. **And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli.**—*The child prophet:*—This white flower blossomed on a dunghill. The continuous growth of a character, from a child serving God, and to old age walking in the same path, is the great lesson which the story of Samuel teaches us. "The child is father of the man," and all his long days are "bound each to each by" true religion. There are two types of experience among God's greatest servants. Paul, made an apostle from a persecutor, heads the one class. Timothy in the New Testament and Samuel in the Old represent the other. An Augustine or a Bunyan is made the more earnest, humble, and whole-hearted by the remembrance of a wasted youth and of God's arresting mercy. But there are a serenity and continuity about a life which has grown up in the fear of God that have their own charm and blessing. It is well to have "much transgression" forgiven, but it may be better to have always been "innocent" and ignorant of it. Samuel's peaceful service is contrasted, in the second half of the first verse, with the sad cessation of Divine revelation in that dreary time of national laxity. A demoralised priesthood, an alienated people, a silent God,—these are the outstanding features of the period, when this fair life of continuous worship unfolded itself. This flower grew in a desert. *What Samuel's call resembles in modern times:*—The call of Samuel was not a call to become a servant of God,—that call Samuel had received when he was first brought to the tabernacle, and there solemnly dedicated to God's service,—but to be a prophet of God, and a great reformer of the Church and nation. Moreover, in bad times of the Church, and in evil days, whatever shape the evil takes, whether

it shows itself in the form of profligacy and a relaxation of wholesome discipline, or in wide-spread superstition, or in doubt and unbelief, Almighty God even now-a-days raises up men who are fitted to grapple with the evil, and to set right (with His gracious assistance) the things that are wrong. This is the way in which all great changes for good have been made in the world—they have been all brought about by one or two strong characters, suited by God's Providence to the times in which they lived, who have been vividly impressed with the sad state of things around them, and have resolved, it may be very early in life, to devote their whole time and energy to mending it. But now observe what are the conditions of such a thing happening. Little Samuel, when the call of God reached him at the age of twelve was found not doing anything remarkable or extraordinary, but engaged in the ordinary commonplace duties of his station. It is wonderful how many cases there are in the Bible of persons called to be or to do something great, when they were engaged in doing the common everyday duties of their station. Gideon, Moses, David, Elisha. What do these and several other instances of the same sort teach, but that in order to be called by God to something good and great, people need not travel out of the high-road of their commonplace everyday occupations, but rather should be found busied in these occupations? (*Dean Goulburn.*) *A reformation beginning in the soul of a child:*—In the days when the High Priest Eli was judge of Israel, there appeared in the sanctuary of Shiloh a wonderful child: his name was Samuel. It was a dark and stormy time; there were fears within and fightings without. Israel was climbing a steep hill—arduously, painfully. Her progress was slow; she was alternately worsted and victorious. And the struggle was more arduous from the fact that there was no prophecy. It was an age of materialism. The hands of Moses were no longer uplifted on the mountain; the eyes of Moses no longer gazed on a promised glory. Religion had become a form; its spirit had fled. There were few remains left of that heroic time when Joshua had fought for God, and Deborah had sung for God. The nation had lost its poetry, and had lost its faith, these had to be rekindled anew at the lamp of heaven. Where was the new kindling to begin? Where was the Divine spirit to touch the world once more? In the heart of the sage? No. In the breast of the old man? No. In the leaders of the Jewish armies? No. It was to begin in the soul of a little child. Out of the mouth of a babe in knowledge, God was to ordain strength. (*George Matheson, D.D.*) *The child prophet no miracle:*—Was he a miracle—this little Samuel? No—in the view characteristic of the Bible he is the real and normal aspect of humanity. So normal is he that Christ says we must all return to his state before we can become seers. What, think you, does Jesus mean when He declares that we can only realise the beauty of the Kingdom through the eyes of a little child? Is it not simply this, that to see the beauty of anything we require a *first eye*? Take the Bible itself. To see the beauties of the Bible, one would require to say to us what the prophet said to Hezekiah, "Let the shadow go back ten degrees." We should need to be transported back into life's morning, to divest ourselves of all preconceived opinions, to imagine that we were reading the record for the first time. That is precisely the standpoint which Christianity promises to create. It professes to make old things new, in other words, to let us see the old things as they *looked* when they were new, and so to give us a true sense of their power and beauty. What is this but to recreate in us the life of Samuel! What is this but to say that the true seer must ever be a child, that, however grown-up he be, it is by the survival of his childhood that he sees the Kingdom of God. Little Samuel is no miracle. He reveals the normal law of faith. (*George Matheson, D.D.*) *And the Word of the Lord was precious in those days.*—*The Word of the Lord precious:*—From Moses to Samuel, a period of several hundred years, there was no prophet regularly appointed; particular revelations were made to individuals; but there was no acknowledged prophet. The natural consequence was, that such intimations of the Divine will, as were then given, made a deeper impression: they were more highly valued and more eagerly sought for, than when the gift of prophecy, in after ages, became more common. Such is the perverseness of man; blessings of every description are estimated, not according to their excellence, but their rarity; not according to the ease, but the difficulty, with which they are to be obtained. And further, when in possession of a blessing, we are often utterly

insensible of its value; we abuse it in thoughtless excess, and are ready to squander it away; but the moment it is departed, we discover our blindness and folly. Meat and drink and raiment, the air we breathe, the sun and the shower, excite no spirit of gratitude, and by many are scarcely received and remembered as blessings; but in the days of famine and pestilence, amidst the warfare and desolation of raging elements, these benefits and mercies are painfully acknowledged, and ardently desired. And thus it is of domestic happiness and comfort: the value of home is frequently not appreciated until it is forsaken and lost; the worth of a friend is sometimes but lightly considered, till he "goes hence and is no more seen." These observations are also illustrative of the feeling and conduct of men, in regard to their spiritual privileges and blessings. We are apt to express a wonder at the obstinate indifference of the people of Israel to their religious advantages and instructions; we are astonished, that they could forget their miraculous deliverances by the hand of Moses, and the manifold revelations vouchsafed through him for their knowledge and guidance: yet in truth, the history of Israel is but too faithful a picture of the people of God in other times and other countries; by no means excluding our own. Before the age of printing, when the copies of the sacred word were comparatively few, the Christian, who was so happy as to possess one, commonly regarded it as a treasure. The value set upon the word of God, its preciousness in the heart of man, is not proportioned to the frequency and the fullness of its communication. It is in almost every dwelling, but not in every dwelling esteemed and loved. The Bible is grievously neglected both by rich and poor. From this lamentable neglect of the word of God, we may readily account for the want of religious principle, for the decay of religious character, for the overspreading of corruption and vice, so notorious in the Christian world. Let us suppose that it should please God, for the heedlessness of this nation, to deprive us of the privilege and blessing of the Bible; and to declare, that the neglected ministry of His word should be continued no longer: we should undoubtedly regard this as the direst calamity which could possibly befall us. Then let us be consistent; and whilst we do enjoy this invaluable favour of heaven, let it be cherished and improved. Let the Gospel, instead of being less precious to us, on account of its universal publication, and its facility of attainment, be therefore prized the more. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *The preciousness of the word of the Lord in the day of evil*.—I. THE WORD OF THE LORD—To this high honour the Bible professes to aspire: it claims to be nothing less than the word of the Lord. What does the Christian believe, compared with the man who believes that the Scriptures are a cunningly-devised fable? It is to him we plainly apply the exclamation, "O man, great is thy faith." We indeed believe difficulties; but he believes absurdities: we believe mysteries; but he swallows absolute impossibilities. O Christian, your faith does not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the word of God: yet the wisdom of man has always been on your side. Take up your Bible now, and examine it internally—is it not worthy of God? Upon the same principle that when I survey the works of creation I exclaim, "This is the finger of God;" so when I peruse the Scriptures, I feel the impress of the Divine agency: I am perfectly sure, that whoever was the author of the Book, he was a holy being, he was a wise being, he was a benevolent being; I am sure he knew me perfectly, and was concerned for my welfare. II. ITS PRECIOUSNESS—"Precious" means valuable; something of great worth and importance. You will observe the preciousness of a thing is very distinguishable from the truth of it, in the former argument. Nothing can indeed be valuable and important that is not true; but a thing may be true without being valuable and important. But here both these are conjoined—the veracity and the excellency. This may be inferred, not only from the Author, but the design. What is the design now of the word of God, but the restoration of man from all the effects of moral evil, and placing him in a condition superior to that in which he was originally created? The most precious book in the world to me ought to be that which contains "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord:" and this volume does contain it. How precious is it to have a standard of doctrine with regard to our belief; so that if we feel perplexities we may call in the judgment of God the Father Himself. How satisfactory is it to have a rule of duty with regard to conduct. How wretched we must feel if we had been left to conjecture what God would have us to do, and how he would have us to walk. As to matters of moment,

here everything is so legibly inscribed, that he may run that reads it. We must not, before we dismiss this part of our subject, overlook its influence and efficacy. We do not mean now with regard to the illumination of the mind, or the relief of the pardoned conscience, or the setting of the man's poor heart at rest, so that he shall no longer run up and down this wide world, crying, "Who will shew us any good?" but we refer now to his moral transformation. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." And we must also observe the value of the Scriptures, as it appears not only when personally, but relatively considered. You will observe that where it is not available to renew, it restrains: where it does not sanctify it civilises. The Jews had the Oracles of God committed to them; this it was which humanised them. How precious should the Scriptures be that have closed so many avenues of wretchedness, and opened so many scenes of comfort. III. THE SEASON OF ITS PRECIOUSNESS. It would be precious in itself, if no one ever regarded it: just as the jewel is equally valuable though the swine trample it under its hoofs. But it is with the word as it is with the Author of it; "to them that believe He is precious," and to them that believe it is precious. "The word of the Lord was particularly precious in those days." 1. The days of destitution. Such were the days of Samuel: this was the case also in after times with the church, when they said, "We see not any signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us, any that knoweth how long." How precious were the Scriptures before their translation; how many were there to whom the sacred treasure was inaccessible. Suppose now the word of God was remaining in the original Hebrew and Greek, what would it then be to you? Why, it would be like a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; like so many fine paintings hung up in a dark room. In the days of Queen Mary the use of it was absolutely prohibited; we read of one farmer who gave a whole load of hay for a single leaf of one of the epistles. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." There may be something like these days of destitution existing in some instances now: they may be produced by accidents, by diseases, by deafnesses, and so on. One is deaf, so that he cannot hear the word; another is blind, so that he cannot see. I remember, some years ago, a farmer in the country, a very pious man, he was advancing in years, and his eyes were growing dim: I often saw him reading the Scriptures at his window, and he seemed to be musing as well as reading; he seemed to be committing it to memory: and when I asked him, I found this was the case: "O," said he, "I am making provision for a dark day, that when I can no longer read, in the multitude of my thoughts I shall have comfort left to my soul." We all know best the value of a thing by the want of it. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." 2. The days of conviction. 3. The days of affliction. Said Bolingbroke under his affliction, "my philosophy forsakes me in my affliction." But did Sir Philip Sidney's philosophy forsake him, when, after a battle, he having to undergo a dreadful operation, said to the surgeon, "Sir, you are come to a poor timid creature in himself; but to one who, by the grace of God, is raised above his own weakness: and therefore, do not dishonour your art in sparing the patient." "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? 4. Dying days. I was one day called in to see a poor man on his dying bed; and he began, the moment I entered the room, to address me in these words: "Sir," said he, "I have a long journey before me, and I don't know one step of the way." Hobbes of Malmesbury, when he was dying, said, "I leave my body to the grave, and my soul to the great Perhaps. I am taking," says he, "a step in the dark." This was not the worst of it; he was not only taking a step in the dark, but a step into the dark. (*W. Jay.*) *The precious word*:—Precious or rare—for the word may be translated so—precious because it was translated so—precious because it was rare. Like the long dry season, the heavens seemed to be sealed; and the coming of Samuel was the beginning of a new era. The Word of the Lord was rare! We have got to speak of the Bible as being the Word of the Lord, and, speaking broadly, the Bible is a store of messages from God. I question sometimes whether the Bible has gained anything by being so cheap. It was rare once, and it is sure that it was precious when it was rare. When the City of London had but one Bible chained to the reading-desk of St. Paul's Cathedral the citizens of London crowded to hear it read. The Word of the Lord was precious in those days. Now this implies several things. 1. First of all, that God does speak to men. Deism, the coldest thing, perhaps, in the shape of a religion that man has ever believed—Deism says it is beneath God to have any longing to come into personal intercourse with men. A man may write a book and inspire you

with his ideas, yet he may resent it very much if you propose to bring yourself into personal intercourse with him. Mr. Haweis speaks of the astonishment with which Mr. Tennyson received him when, as a young fellow something like eighteen years of age, he ventured to call upon the poet to thank him for what the poetry had been to him as a young man; and perhaps, who knows! to ask the poet's exposition of one or two particular passages; but the poet seemed to think the youth was very eccentric, if not very impudent. So the Deist might study the laws and phenomena of Nature—the great book which carries upon it the signature of the Author, the signature of God; but, he says, it would be irreverence for him to presume for a moment that he could be of concern to the great Author, that the Almighty should send special messages to him. God was to him what the Sphinx was to the Egyptian worshipper—there was a light in its face which suggested that it could tell the worshipper wonderful things if it cared to tell, but that it would keep it all to itself. So to Deism God was a sphinx; He never spoke.

2. Finding by seeking. It is a matter of greatest importance that we should believe that. Many men never see God, never hear His voice, because they do not expect to do so. They never look for Him, they never hush themselves to listen for Him. Darwin was always discovering some fresh fact in Nature, but then he was always looking for them; he was always making experiments, always giving Nature an opportunity to show how she did her work. He knew that Nature was always speaking if he only gave her a chance. But he never expected God to speak to him. He gave up praying because he had persuaded himself that God never spoke to man.

3. The many voices of God. Let me add to that, God speaks in many ways. The voices of God are many—the voice of reason, the voice of conscience, the voice of material nature. Why, science is getting to protest that as emphatically as anybody ever did. We often sing, "So God is here, let us adore," and "How awful is this place." If there is any place where that might be sung with propriety, it is the laboratory where the chemist and the physicist are at work. This gives an entirely new meaning to nature. A barrel organ may give correct music: the barrel organ does not make a mistake. The violin gives you the same music, yet not the same. There is a man's soul in the violin. Nature, as the materialist talks about it, is a mere barrel organ. Nature is a violin to the man who knows that every note of it is produced by the finger touch of God, the mind of God, the heart of God, the delight of God in the world that He has made, is in it. I heard a phonograph the other day sing a song of Adelina Patti. It was not absolutely Adelina Patti, but it was correct. There was not one missing note in it, every word, every intonation, the liquid clearness of the beautiful voice; why it was absolutely human. I have heard of a General taking a leaf out of his pocket-book on the field of battle, handing it over to a messenger, and sending the message to some one somewhere in the rough battle. It was a rough missive; the man to whom it was sent kept it, though, as a memorial of the battle. It conveyed the commander's message as effectively as if it had been written on embossed paper. So people nowadays make a great deal about the numerical or the technical mistakes which are said to be found in the Old Book. Do not be foolish; it is a message written on poor paper if you like, here and there, but the message is none the worse for that. Do not demean yourself to talk of the paper—what of the Message? Robert Browning speaks of a musician who had music in him that no instrument that he had ever tried had been able to reveal. It haunted him, it pained him, it was a burden to him; and he must tell the music out. So he built his own instrument, and had the supreme joy of uttering the music that was in him. God had told Himself in the words of seer, and prophet, and psalmist, but He had never told Himself thoroughly yet. But He will find a voice for Himself; the love of God, the law of righteousness, which must not be insulted, even though the world be wrecked. He told it by the cross. Glorious is the cross; God's last voice, the Word of the Lord.

4. Deaf to the Word. Now let me add to that. The direst misfortune, the direst calamity that can happen to man is that God's Word should cease to come to him. It is not that the Word ever ceases for the matter of that. Science has been making the most wonderful progress during our day. Nature seems to have taken the veil from off her face; but Nature has always been doing this, Nature has always been willing to tell her secrets. But in these days our ears are opened, and we are ready to hear. The misery of the world has always been making an appeal; but philanthropy, in the sense in which we understand philanthropy to-day, has only just been born. The world is only just beginning to understand that it owes pity

and help to the poor, to the criminal, to the wicked one. We may bury our souls in frivolity and never take the trouble to think: but literature is here, art and science are here, and the bread which maketh the soul of man hale and strong—this is here. The Word of the Lord is always here; it is only that we drown it in the din of frivolities and material ambitions. Never read and never think, and no new ideas will ever come to you. The spirit of truth and understanding never thrusts itself upon those who never seek it. 5. Seasons of awakening. And lastly, there are seasons when the Church awakes to a vivid sense of that. These seasons of awakening come to every high region and touch into life every high matter you can think of. We talk about the Dark Ages in England; for centuries the world was asleep; the Word of God was rare in those days. The men to whom it came were few, a rare soul now and then; a Wyckliffe heard the voice of God, but as a whole that period was a long sleep. At last England awoke. There was the richness literature; there came intellectual awakening. In the age of Shakespeare England was born again. There was a spiritual awakening. Luther shook Europe." The Reformers lit a fire which has never been put out. (*J. Morlais Jones*.) *Wanted: A prophet*—"There was no open vision." It was a time of stagnation and stupor. It was a time in which all men had sunk into a dead level of dulness and formality and mere routine. There was no enthusiasm, no earnestness. Men went through their work and lived their lives in a humdrum languishing sort of way, without heart and without spirit. There was a complete absence of that intensity of feeling which is ever the evidence of a strenuous life. "There was no open vision." It was a time of deep religious depression. It was a "gelid, torpid, tortoise-like existence" that man led. Now, there are people who say that we are passing through a similar period of spiritual depression now, and have been passing through it for some long time, in the different countries of Europe, and especially in our own country. Why had God ceased to speak to, and commune with, His people as of yore? 1. Well, in the first place, there was no prophet; there was no man to act as a go-between. There was no prophet who could communicate God's message to His people. It was a lack of men with the prophetic gift. God always speaks to His people through chosen witnesses, and when these chosen witnesses are not forthcoming, God's voice is silent. Old Eli was, indeed, a man of God, but his utter failure to rule his own house discredited him. The channel of communication was choked up in that quarter, simply owing to the weakness and imbecility of the man of God. Before God can communicate with the world there must be a chosen vessel. The vessel itself must be filled first before the world can receive the messages of God. What we need just now is a man who is intellectually head and shoulders above his fellows, and who would act as a great leader of men. We are in a kind of backwater as regards the possession of men of commanding intellect and personality just now; but I cannot help thinking, nevertheless, that our greatest need of all is a mighty prophet of God, a man with a message from the Lord, a man able to stir up the nation to its very depth in spiritual things. Musical services are all very well, and I enjoy them; but they are not our chief need. It is not a great singer that we want, but it is a great prophet, a man full of the Holy Ghost and of power, who will rouse the indifferent and the careless, and stir up the lukewarm and the half-hearted, and make the religion of Christ a power in the land once again. 2. Again, there was no open vision because the people were not in a proper mood to receive the vision. The soil was not congenial, so to speak, for the growth of prophets. It was a time of deep spiritual dearth, a time in which men and women were almost wholly engrossed in the material and the present. The supply of prophets was just exactly equal to the demand, and that was—nil! Prophesying in the sense of forth-telling—preaching—is not much in favour just now. There is this incessant clamour for extremely short sermons, which is not at all a healthy sign. "Why do not men go to church?" Why, because your immature, unsubstantial, perfunctory ten minutes' discourse, which you falsely call a sermon, has driven them out, for, wherever the sermon is a real thing, manfully grappling with great life problems, there the men do congregate, and there they will continue to congregate, for there they receive a message from God. "And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." 3. But, again, I am glad to be able to observe that this time of depression and lassitude and spiritual famine was not continuous and permanent. God never wholly deserts His people. Again He sends His prophets to speak to them and to reveal precious truths to them. Ah, and it is ever so. It is always when the fortune of the church is at its

lowest that God sends His servants, the prophets, to rouse it and to cleanse it. It was in the darkest days of the Papacy, when Alexander Borgia sat on the throne of St. Peter, that Savonarola made his appearance. It was when the sale of indulgences had become a scandal and a menace to the very existence of religion and of the church that Luther came, and with his mighty voice initiated the Reformation. And it was in the dark and materialistic days of the eighteenth century, when our own beloved church was dying of apathy and "respectability" that Wesley and Whitefield and the leaders of the evangelical revival came, and set in motion that mighty wave of spiritual fervour and enthusiasm which has not wholly spent its force yet. And mark you! All these mighty revolutions, and revivals, and reformations have been brought about by the power of prophesying—by the foolishness of preaching. It is to preaching that even the Oxford Movement owes its origin and vitality. It was Keble's sermon on "National Apostasy," according to all reliable testimony, that gave that movement its birth. And it is by preaching that the next great spiritual awakening is to be brought about. Meantime, our duty is plain. We must pray God to speed the time of this awakening, to speed the time when this terrible spiritual stagnation is at an end. (*R. Jones.*) **There was no open vision.**—*Times without vision*:—I. **THERE ARE TIMES OF OPEN VISION.** This phrase has been a difficulty to interpreters. It has been explained as referring to the times in earlier Jewish history when God appeared in the pillars of cloud and fire, and by angelic ministry. It has also been explained as referring to the open and authoritative promulgation of Divine truth. It has been noticed as a feature of human history that it divides into alternate periods marked by the possession and the lack of spiritual insight. There are times of open vision. Heaven, then, is near to men. They are sensitive to spiritual impressions. They are inclined to attach spiritual meanings to material things. The gift of vision is diffused. The things that are unseen and eternal appear. These are periods of religious activity and progress. The happy age following the conquest under Joshua was a time of open vision. The nation had enjoyed the heavenly gift. The present century, in contrast with the past, is a period of vision. It is a characteristic of this age that the supernatural is looked for and readily believed. With all our vast material progress, we have made a spiritual advance yet greater. It has been a period of delusions, so ready have men been to listen to all voices. But it has also been an age of faith. Would that we might be spared its dreary contrast. II. **THERE ARE TIMES WITHOUT OPEN VISION**—when heaven is far away, when men have faith only in what they see and handle. The eighteenth was such a century. Science and philosophy made marvellous advances; but they were atheistic. The light of the Puritan century had faded out of the sky; or the eye of the new generation could not receive its illumination. Men questioned, derided, triumphed over religion. Then was the deification of the worldly spirit. The church was invaded. The clergy became unspiritual. With the loss of vision, truth is lost. This is especially true of the stern truths—our accountability to God, the guilt and doom of sin, the fixed and narrow limits of probation, the final judgment, and the eternity of its awards. In such an age there is no fear of God before men's eyes. The picture of the times of Samuel, in the account of the wickedness of Eli's sons, is appalling. III. **THERE IS NO TIME WITHOUT THE WORD OF THE LORD.** Though the vision is at times withholden, God is always with us in his word. Why the vision is withdrawn we may not be able to explain. God has a purpose. It is sufficient that he still speaks. Samuel represented a renewed and more extensive dispensation of the word. The spoken word, like the written, has never been lost. Visions might be interrupted, but not the continuity of revelation. It has never ceased. IV. **THE WORD REQUIRES A HUMAN EAR.** Eli's sons wanted the ear that hears God's voice. The hearing of Eli, like his sight, was dim; Samuel had a sensitive ear. "The Lord revealed himself to Samuel." "'Literally,' says Stanley, 'the Lord uncovered the ear'—a touching and significant figure taken from the manner in which the possessor of a secret moves back the long hair of his friend and whispers into the ear thus laid bare the word that no one else may hear." V. **THE WORD OF GOD REQUIRES HUMAN LIPS TO SPEAK IT.** Samuel has received the message. He must deliver it to Eli. (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

Vers. 2—14. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place.—*The character of Eli*:—Eli and Samuel. 1. They are contrasted in point of years: for the one is a boy, the other a grey-headed old man;

and if it were for only this, the chapter would be one of deep interest. For it is interesting always to see a friendship between the old and the young. It is striking to see the aged one retaining so much of freshness and simplicity as not to repel the sympathies of boyhood. It is surprising to see the younger one so advanced and thoughtful, as not to find dull the society of one who has outlived excitability and passion. 2. They are contrasted again in point of office. Both are judges of Israel. But Eli is a judge rendering up his trust, and closing his public career. Samuel is a judge entering upon his office. The venerable judge of forty years is sentenced by the judge elect. 3. Still more striking is the contrast in point of character. Here the difference of inferiority is on the wrong side. It is the young who is counselling, supporting, admonishing the old. 4. Once more, we have here the contrast between a judge by office and a judge by Divine call. It is wise after an earthly sort to have an appointed succession. Hereditary judges, hereditary nobles, hereditary sovereigns: without them human life would run into inextricable confusion. Nevertheless, such earthly arrangements only represent the heavenly order. The Divine order of Government is the rule of the Wise and Good. From time to time, one who has qualifications direct from God is made, in Scripture, to stand side by side with one who has his qualifications only from office or earthly appointment; and then the contrast is marvellous indeed. And thus by the side of Eli, the judge by office, stands Samuel, the judge by Divine call: qualified by wisdom, insight, will, resting on obedience, to guide and judge God's people Israel. Very instructive are the contrasts of this chapter. I. ELI'S CHARACTER. II. ELI'S DOOM. Eli's character has two sides; we will take the bright side first. The first point remarkable in him is the absence of envy. Eli furthers Samuel's advancement, and assists it to his own detriment. God's priest and God's judge, to whom so fitly as to him could God send a message? But another is preferred: the inspiration comes to Samuel, and Eli is superseded and disgraced. God's message for all Israel comes to a boy: to one who had been Eli's pupil, to one beneath him, who had performed for him servile offices. This was the bitter cup put into his hand to drink. And yet Eli assists him to attain this dignity. He perceives that God has called the child. He does not say in petulance—"Then, let this favoured child find out for himself all he has to do, I will leave him to himself." Consider how difficult this conduct of Eli's was. Remember how difficult it is to be surpassed by a younger brother, and bear it with temper. It is hard to give information which we have collected with pains, but which we cannot use, to another who can make use of it. Where is the professional man, secular or clerical; who will so speak of another of the same profession, while struggling with him in honourable rivalry, or so assist him, as to ensure that the brightest lustre shall shine upon what he really is? Whoever will ponder these things will feel that Eli's was no common act. It was easy for Eli to have instructed any one else how to approach God. But the difficulty was how to instruct Samuel. Samuel alone, in all Israel, crossed his path. And yet Eli stood the test. He was unswervingly just. He threw no petty hindrances in his way. 2. Remark the absence of all priestly pretensions. Eli might with ease have assumed the priestly tone. When Samuel came with his strange story that he had heard a voice calling to him in the dark, Eli might have fixed upon him a clear, cold unsympathising eye, and said, "This is excitement—mere enthusiasm. I am the appointed channel of God's communications; I am the priest. Hear the Church. Unordained, unanointed with priestly oil, a boy, a child, it is presumption from you to pretend to communications from Jehovah! A layman has no right to hear Voices; it is fanaticism." On the other hand, Eli might have given his own authoritative interpretation to Samuel, of that word of God which he had heard. But suppose that interpretation had been wrong? Eli did neither of these things. He sent Samuel to God. He taught him to inquire for himself. There are two sorts of men who exercise influence. The first are those who perpetuate their own opinions, bequeath their own names, form a sect, gather a party round them who speak their words, believe their belief. Such men were the ancient Rabbis. And of such men, in and out of the Church, we have abundance now. It is the influence most aimed at and most loved. The second class is composed of those who stir up faith, conscience, thought, to do their own work. Such men propagate not many views; but they propagate Life itself in inquiring minds and earnest hearts. Now this is God's real best work. Men do not think so. They like to be guided. They ask, what am I to think? and what am I to believe? and what am I to feel? Save me the trouble of reflecting and the anguish of

inquiring. And this is the Ministry and its work—not to drill hearts, and minds, and consciences, into right forms of thought and mental postures, but to guide to the Living God who speaks. To bring the soul face to face with God, and supersede ourselves, that is the work of the Christian ministry. 3. There was in Eli a resolve to know the whole truth. "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that He said unto thee." Eli asked in earnest to know the worst. It would be a blessed thing to know what God thinks of us. But next best to this would be to see ourselves in the light in which we appear to others: other men's opinion is a mirror in which we learn to see ourselves. Therefore it is a blessing to have a friend like Samuel, who can dare to tell us truth, judicious, candid, wise. True friendship will not retail tormenting trifles; but what we want is one friend at least, who will extenuate nothing, but with discretion tell the worst, using unflinchingly the sharp knife which is to cut away the fault. 4. There was pious acquiescence in the declared Will of God. When Samuel had told him every whit, Eli replied, "It is the Lord." The highest religion could say no more. Free from envy, free from priestcraft, earnest, humbly submissive—that is the bright side of Eli's character, and the side least known or thought of. There is another side to Eli's character. He was a wavering, feeble, powerless man, with excellent intentions, but an utter want of will; and if we look at it deeply, it is will that makes the difference between man and man; not knowledge, not opinions, not devoutness, not feeling, but will—the power to be. Let us look at the causes of this feebleness. There are apparently two. 1. A recluse life—he lived in the temple. And such are the really fatal men in the work of life, those who look out on human life from a cloister, or who know nothing of men except through books. Doubtless there is a danger in knowing too much of the world. But, beyond all comparison, of the two extremes the worst is knowing too little of life. 2. That feebleness arose out of original temperament. In sentiment Eli might be always trusted: in action he was for ever false, because he was a weak, vacillating man. Therefore his virtues were all of a negative character. Let us look at the result of such a character. 1. It had no influence. Eli was despised by his own sons. He was not respected by the nation. 2. It manifested incorrigibility. Eli was twice warned; once by a prophet, once by Samuel. Both times he was warned in vain. There are persons who go through life sinning and sorrowing—sorrowing and sinning. No experience teaches them. Torrents of tears flow from their eyes. They are full of eloquent regrets. But tears, heart-breaks, repentance, warnings, are all in vain. Where they did wrong once, they do wrong again. 3. It resulted in misery to others. (F. W. Robertson, *M.A.*)

Ver. 3. And ere the lamp of God went out.—*The lights of the sanctuary ever burning*:—A blacksmith can do nothing when his fire is out, and in this respect he is the type of a minister. If all the lights in the outside world are quenched the lamps that burn in the sanctuary ought still to remain undimmed; for that fire no curfew must ever be rung. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *A memorable surprise*:—With the first mention of the temple we have the last mention of the candlestick, for, as Dean Stanley points out, its place was taken by ten separate lamp-stands in Solomon's temple, and that which appears represented on the arch of Titus at Rome was a copy of the original made for Herod's temple, and carried off at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman conqueror. This lamp of the Lord was lit at sunset, and supplied with sufficient oil to last through the night. At sunrise the lights were extinguished. The narrative therefore suggests that it was in the early morning the Lord appeared to Samuel. In Nature's morning, and in the morn of life, came the sunrise of the soul, the great spiritual awakening to the Hebrew boy. It came when the world was still and the heart was young. (J. B. Morgan.) **And Samuel was laid down to sleep.**—*Little Samuel in bed*:—There was once a great painter, and his name was Sir Peter Lennie, and Sir Peter Lennie said that he never looked at a bad picture; for if he looked at a bad picture, he was quite sure when he began to paint next time, one of his colours would have a bad tint, or one of his figures would have a crooked line. So we will not look at a bad picture, but a good one, and Samuel is a good one. Josephus, who wrote "the history of the Jews," tells us that Samuel was twelve years old when that happened which we are going to think about now. It is a very great thing to be twelve years old. I find that in the Bible. Do you know when a little

Jew became twelve years old, then he was admitted into the Jewish Church; and he was therefore called "the child of the law;" it was something like our "Confirmation," that is at twelve years old. Do you remember a little girl, twelve years old (who had died) to whom Jesus was very kind? Do you remember He raised her from the dead? He said to her "Talitha cumi." She rose up, and do you know Jesus was very kind; He thought she was hungry, and He said, "Give her something to eat." It was very thoughtful and kind to say that! Do you know what Jesus did when He was twelve years old? Did He teach the scribes and elders? No, He did not. Did He learn of them? Yes, when He was twelve years old, He went and "asked them questions." And Samuel was twelve years old at the time we are going to think about him. Little Samuel went to bed. He had a right to go to bed. He had earned his bed. He had been very busy all day—for it says just before, he had been "ministering," that is serving, all day. Do you earn your bed? He had earned his by being very busy. I want to speak a little about going to bed. When you go to bed take care of two things—Wash, and wind up the clock. Don't misunderstand me. I say wash. Do I mean wash your body? Yes, I say God tells us to do that. Be very particular about washing, because it says in the tenth chapter of the Hebrews, we are not only to have "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," but "our bodies washed with pure water." I would not give much for the religion of that boy or girl who is not very clean, very particular about washing. Do you know what I mean by "winding up the clock?" You have got something inside you like a clock—your heart. There are a great many strange works there like a clock. You will find this, if you do not take care, it will run down and stop. I wind up my watch every night; you must wind up your heart every night, or else it will stop. Pray to God about it; wind it up. I do not know where little Samuel's bed was; you do not know, do you? I should think it was very near the ark, and very near Eli's, but it was not in the same room as Eli's. One thing I will tell you, it was at the foot of Jacob's ladder. If you see a little baby in the cradle, that little baby is sleeping at the foot of Jacob's ladder. Every cradle in the world is at the foot of Jacob's ladder. I like that thought very much, don't you. If you are a good child, I am sure it will be. Your bed will be at the foot of Jacob's ladder. I hope when you go to bed you will have what little Samuel had—do you know what he had? A very soft pillow. Miss Havergall has written a very pretty book on "Little Pillows." I will tell you how she came to write it. There was a little girl of the name of Ethel; she came to stay with her aunt, and after she had been tucked up, and her aunt had given her the last kiss, and was just going away, her aunt came back and said, "Ethel, would you like a little pillow?" She looked round on the bed, and saw she had a little soft one there, and she said, "I have got one, auntie." "I don't mean that," her aunt replied. "I mean another kind of pillow. It is very nice when you go to bed to have a thought, perhaps a text of the Bible, and as you put your head on the pillow, so you put that little text or thought under your heart, and it makes a nice soft pillow to go to sleep upon. Would you like me to give you one?" "Yes, indeed," replied little Ethel. So her auntie gave her a little text to be a pillow for her to sleep softly on. That made Miss Havergall write her book. So she has given just thirty-one little pillows—one for every night in the month; and she has written another little book called "Morning Bells," thoughts for the morning. I should advise you to get these two little books and read them—"Little Pillows" and "Morning Bells." Some say—in the 127th Psalm, it does not mean, "God gives His beloved sleep," but "God gives to His beloved while they are sleeping." Can God give us anything while we are sleeping? Yes, I think he does. There are different kinds of calls. Sometimes God calls us to give up naughty things, to become a Christian. Was that Samuel's call? No, because Samuel was a good boy. He was God's child. He was what we call "a Christian" then. He was called to do something. God called him by the name of "Samuel." And little Samuel made a mistake when he thought it was a man speaking to him, and not God. Perhaps you are making the same mistake now? Who is speaking to you now? I, or God? Which? God. When you go home, and your father and mother tell you something, who is telling it you? Your father or mother, or God? God. Because God made your father and mother. He made you their child, and He tells you to "obey your father and mother," and He is speaking to you through them. And if you disobey your father and mother, you disobey God. I think I

once told you what is the seal upon "The Baptist Missionary Society." They have on their seal—shall I tell you what? An ox; and on one side of the ox is a plough, and on the other side is an altar; and the ox is saying, in Latin, that he is "ready for either"—ready to go and be killed if it is wanted, or ready to go and drag the plough, if it is wanted. Willing for either. Here I am, ready for anything. If God wishes me to die, I am ready to die; if God wishes me to work, I am ready for work. Ready for either. "Here I am." I heard of a little girl who said to her mother one day, "Mamma, now let's sit very quiet, don't let us speak a word—let's be very still, and let us try if we cannot hear the angels singing up in heaven." The little girl could not hear that; but it was a nice thought! "Let us be quite still, and see if we cannot hear the angels speak." If you will be very still, and say, "Speak, Lord; I will listen:" God will speak to you. I am sure He will. Do you know—it is a wonderful thing—that God tells secrets to little children that He does not tell to anybody else. God did not tell Eli, though Eli was an old man; but he told the little boy of twelve years of age; He told him a secret; He told His secret to the little boy. Do you remember anything like that in the New Testament? Do you remember there was only one time in all His life that we are told Jesus was happy, that "He rejoiced in spirit." You will find in Luke x. 21, what it was that made Jesus happy. God shows His secrets to babes. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Vers. 4-10. **Then the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.**—*The child Samuel*:—"Child" is not a precise equivalent for the Hebrew word so rendered, which is considerably wider in meaning, and includes adolescence. Samuel was probably a youth when called. He had been growing quietly in age and goodness, while Eli's sons were growing in licentiousness. The two growths are strikingly contrasted in the previous chapter, where, after each statement as to their wickedness, a clause comes in telling how Samuel advanced in his ministry before the Lord. His word was "precious," which does not mean highly valued, but seldom heard, because ears were too much clogged with earth, and there was no prophetic "vision" open—that is, widely spread—because there were few eyes purged to see it. A prophet was needed to arrest the growing evil, and the needed prophet was in training. The best place for a young life to dwell is the temple of God. "They that are planted in the house of the Lord" will grow fair and straight, and be sheltered from distorting influences, and from many a gnawing enemy that works havoc among the young shoots. A youth that keeps austere remote from the vileness of Eli's sons will be saved from their fate, and will receive messages from the ark as authentic as that which woke Samuel. "The Lord called Samuel." No magnificent apocalypse of divine glory shone on the youth's opening eyes. Simply his name was spoken in the tone of one bespeaking his attention and about to give him commands. Whoever spoke knew him, claimed authority over him, and had something for him to do. In a word, the speaker was his master, and needed him. God often assimilates His call to the voices with which we are familiar. A stage comes in every young life when the sense of responsibility is awakened, when the thought of a vocation to battle for the truth starts up. Samuel's mistake tells a great deal, both as to the nature of the voice he heard and as to his relations to Eli. Evidently he had been accustomed to be roused from sleep, to attend to the old man whose blindness would make him need kindly ministrations. As evidently, he had been accustomed cheerfully to answer the call. His loving readiness to spring from sleep and do whatever was needed, are seen in his running to Eli. No holier office can be entrusted to youth than to care for helpless age; and even if the dependent old man or woman has failings, as Eli had, which the younger hates, the duty of service is still plain, and its blessedness will be the greater. But Samuel's mistake has another lesson; for we, too, may think that it is only Eli speaking, when it is really God. There is something very pathetic and beautiful in Eli's quick and ungrudging recognition of God's call to his young attendant. He had had no such communications himself, but he knew them when they came to others. Poor Eli had a bitter pill to swallow when he knew that the boy whom he had trained as his attendant was elevated to the position of a prophet; but he was not offended nor jealous. There is dignity and peace for the old when they heartily acquiesce in the Divine choice of the young to carry his work a stage farther. Samuel had no thought of anything extraordinary, and the explanation of his slowness of apprehension is given in the statement that he "did not yet know the Lord,"

which can only mean that he had not received any Divine communications; for absolute ignorance cannot be supposed in one who had ministered to the Lord all his life. Youth should be slow to believe that its impressions are divine messages. They must be tested well before they are trusted as such. One test, though an imperfect one, is their persistency. When some conviction of duty keeps returning again and again, and forcing us to hear it, we should at least not dismiss it without careful consideration; for it may be the voice of the patient God, who does not let our carelessness silence him. "Thy servant heareth"—an open ear for God's commands and revelations will never be left empty. "Speak, Lord," is a prayer; and it is never offered in vain when it is accompanied, as Samuel's was, by "For thy servant hears." Such a disposition is a prevailing reason with God. If we are ready to listen and obey, He is more than ready to speak. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The call of Samuel*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SAMUEL'S CALL. 1. When the state of the Church was in a very low ebb: The word of prophecy was very precious at that time (ver. 1), a prophet was very rare then, and few or none appeared with open vision by name, though mention be made in general of a prophet (Judg. vi. 8). And of a man of God before (chap. ii. 27). 2. At that time (ver. 2) when the Lord had sent the day before that Man of God mentioned (chapter ii. 27), with heavy tidings to Eli, then the very next day God calls and sends Samuel with the same sad message. 3. In that time of the natural day (ver. 3), when the lamps of the golden candlestick were not yet extinguished, which had been lighted the evening before (Exod. xxvii. 21; Levit. xxiv. 3, II Chron. xiii. 11). So that this was betimes in the morning, and before day that God called Samuel. The place where, in the temple or tabernacle. II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS WORD OF PROPHECY REVEALED TO SAMUEL. III. THE CARRIAGE OF THIS YOUNG PROPHET, when so high and honourable a preferment is put upon him by the Lord. 1. His humility. 2. His modesty. His modesty most appeared, both in his doing the former office of a door-keeper (opening the doors in the morning), though he were now called of God to be a prophet. And likewise he was not forward, but fearful to reveal the Divine oracle to Eli, which yet he might not conceal (ver. 15). 3. His faithfulness also here is manifest in not hiding anything (of that which God had spoke to him) from his master Eli: [He told him every whit] (ver. 18). Though there was not one drachm of comfort in the whole oracle. IV. ELI'S RECEPTION OF THIS RIGID REVELATION FROM GOD BY SAMUEL. Eli was conscious to himself of great guilt, both in his villanous sons, and in himself for indulging their villany, his conscience was a sore conscience, but theirs were seared consciences, and therefore could he presage no good from God; hereupon he advises his pupil to hide nothing from him, but to tell his tutor all that God had told him (vers. i. 16, 17). When Eli had heard God's severe sentence he calmly crieth, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good" (ver. 18), as if he had said the Lord Jehovah hath a sovereign absolute power over all the sons and daughters of men, and may dispose of me and mine, and of all created beings according to his good pleasure, unto which I freely submit. well knowing there be better things in God's will than in my own. (*C. Ness.*)

Ver. 7. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.—*Early religious impressions*:—A study of this story will show parents and teachers much which ought to be supremely helpful in their dealings with those young persons who come under their care. I. THERE IS, FIRST, THE PERIOD OF CONSCIENTIOUS ROUTINE. For a while every child born of Christian parents, and trained as Samuel was, will follow the traditions his father and mother have passed on down to him in course of education. What is it possible for any child now to do, as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, under the family rule? Young people can be taught to pray, to take the care of some practical schemes of usefulness, to study the Word of God diligently, to contribute money to religious causes, to become interested in the poor, to speak words of counsel and encouragement and warning to such as need direction or assistance. The grand old moralities are always within their reach; fidelities at school, courtesies to the aged, consideration for the weak, keeping the Sabbath, aiding in household cares, and full obedience to all God's commands. How far is this truly religious? Children differ extremely. Some of them become spiritual Christians quite early; some never know the date of any experience that might be considered a regeneration; some are alert, imaginative, poetic, sensitive; others are slow,

heavy, and run to rigid moralities with supreme delight and conscientious satisfaction. It is always right to do right, and God loves a virtuous, correct life. Of this we can be comfortably certain. As to the spiritual condition of Samuel at this period of his career, there is found one verse in the record which has given some trouble: "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." Evidently there passed a vivid and permanent change over this boy's heart and history in that night's experience: God called him. II. **AWAKENED RESTLESSNESS IN CHILDREN.** There is a period in the history of almost every one who, reared in a Christian land, has been more or less directly under the pressure of the truth, in which he really faces the great question of his relation to God. And the effort is often an earnest one and is directed towards a positive decision concerning a religious life. This period you may recognise in yourself, or detect in others, almost always by certain unmistakable signs. There will be outward manifestations of solicitude which will show how seriously the soul contemplates its own experience. Skill, however, and especially patience, will be needed to understand these revelations of inward struggle. They often partake of the nature of strategy, and press their advance in the line of a precise contradiction. Then they will have to be read, like Hebrew syllables, from right to left. Every individual of us, in these communities lit with truth, comes one day to see that his path to heaven is unlike that of any other person, and henceforth he must journey on alone. That thought is revolutionary. But the thing to be remembered is this: "And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child." Men and women may forget this, and grow as sorrowfully "amazed" as was Mary when she rebuked Jesus for not paying more attention to her feelings. They ought to recollect those calm words: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (C. S. Robinson, D.D.)

Ver. 8. **Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.**—*Inward convictions*.—I. WE MAY DEFINE A CALL, as usually understood, to be an inward conviction of the soul that such and such is the will of God concerning it, accompanied with an irresistible desire to obey the conviction. In such cases a test is required. There is perhaps no extent of self-deception to which an individual may not be led who concentrates the whole of his thoughts and meditations upon the internal emotions of which he is sensible. Hence the necessity of erecting a tribunal without, to which may be referred the judgment of the inward conviction, and by which we may see whether the voice which is abroad in our hearts, stirring and moving, harmonises with the voice of parents and brethren and priest, that so we may, with Eli, perceive of a surety whether the Lord hath called His child. II. There is another criterion by which men might go far to ascertain the nature of those internal sensations of which they speak, namely, **THE CRITERION OF OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES.** In order to test feeling, we want something removed as far as possible from what is exciting. In the majority of cases it may be fairly assumed that what we are is what God would have us be; the station of life in which we find ourselves is that which He would have us fill. When, therefore, we seem to be Divinely led to an extraordinary course of conduct, it is no vain prudence which bids us inquire whether outward circumstances tend to encourage or dissuade us. (*Bishop Woodford.*) *God's call to the child*.—We can recall a day of spring which began with a clear, bright morning, bathed in sunshine and song, and giving every promise of fair and steady weather. But ere noon the clouds gathered and grey shrouds covered all the blue and gold of the sky. And then the rain came and drenched well-nigh to drowning our last hope of a fair evening. But just as the sun was setting, the veil of cloud lifted in the west, and a sudden gleam of glory shot across the world before all was dark and drear again. So it was with the day of Eli's life. Fair promise of an early manhood was belied by the failure of later years, and we welcome with joy, which yet has its pang of regret, this one gleam of light that shows up in the sad eventide of an old man's broken day. Surely, without unduly spiritualising this simple little incident, we can see in it a parable of history. First of all, Hannah's loan of her boy to the Lord was but the outcome of the instinct of Judaism. From the very first days of the Mosaic dispensation, the children, and particularly the first-born, were dedicated to the Lord. This recognition of the claim of God on the child is, moreover, not one of the merely fugitive elements of Judaism. Much of that great system of religion has passed away—it has been superseded by Christ's more perfect system. All through the ages the Lord has called the children with a gentle

voice that has sounded in the shrine of the child's own heart—surely the purest and sweetest tabernacle that God can inhabit. One thing is made very clear to us as we study the Bible in its attitude to the child, and that is that child-life is of untold value in the sight of God. The position of the child in Judaism was in striking contrast to that occupied by children in the religions of the surrounding nations and of later ages. We can gauge pretty accurately the value put upon child-life in Egypt by Pharaoh's edict, from the results of which Moses was so strangely preserved. Centuries later, the King of Edom sacrificed his son "for a burnt-offering upon the wall." Thus men sought to propitiate their duties by offering "the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls." But, looking in the most favourable light at this sacrifice of children—and perhaps Tennyson's "Victim" gives us the most generous interpretation, is it not a dreadful misinterpretation of the call of Jehovah to the children? It is not their sacrifice at the hands of others that He desires, but the offering of the living sacrifice of their own hearts and service at their own hands. Children have too often been made the vicarious sufferers for others in cases where the vicarious principle does not apply. When we come to more recent times we find that even the value of a sacrifice is denied to child-life. The Roman father was allowed to refuse to accept as his charge any child born to him, if he thought it physically defective or even numerically superfluous. If on its being presented to him he refused to take it in his arms, it was forthwith put out of the way. In Greece it was much the same. The caves beneath Mount Taygetus were full of the bodies of infants that had been exposed by parents, who were fully at liberty to repudiate the duties of parentage. Think for a moment of the swarming crowds of children for ever playing in our streets. "The shout of happy children at their play" sounds poetic until we see the class to whom the words refer most largely, and then we wonder if they are happy. You who live in your comfortable homes, and snugly tuck your own bairns up in their warm, cosy beds at seven or eight o'clock, and would not think of allowing them out after dark, what think you of the little ones who answer your call from your door-step five minutes later for the "Latest Edition?" And yet their souls and bodies are as important in God's sight as the souls and bodies of your own more favoured pets. Truly, the Eli of to-day still fails to perceive that the Lord has called the child. Our Factory Acts have vastly improved the whole matter of child-labour. I remember a friend of mine in a colliery district in the North of England telling me how he was carried at the age of six (for he was too much afraid of the dark above ground to go alone) to the mouth of the coal-pit in the early morning, and then, in the company of two or three other babies of the same age, he went down, down to the dark and noisome galleries below to act as putters—that is, to open and shut the wooden doors for the trucks that passed so close to them that they dared not breathe while they passed. That is done away. Recent Temperance legislation has abolished much of the abuse connected with the serving of children with drink. But much still remains to be done before Christian England can shake off the reproach of Eli that he was so slow to perceive that the Lord had called the child. The modern problem of Hooliganism is largely the outcome of dereliction of duty in this matter. We find in studying the Gospel that Jesus gives a prominent place to the child. Christ has a message for the child. Long centuries of the Christian era let that call and the child's wistful enquiry as to its meaning go alike almost unheeded. It is one of the chief glories of the Evangelical Revival that its leaders "perceived that the Lord had called the child." And one of the earliest outcomes of the great Methodist awakening of the religious life of England was the establishment of Sunday Schools. The ideal of the Christian Church as set before her by her Master and Lord will never be attained until she has thoroughly grasped as a principle, and applied in practice, our Lord's teaching regarding the child. This is twofold—subjective and objective. The subjective aspect of His teaching is that in which the child is made by Him a model in character-building. "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The objective aspect of His teaching is given us in the words, "Whosoever receiveth one of such little children in My name, receiveth Me; and whosoever receiveth Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me." (*G. Waddy Polkinghorne.*)

Ver 10. **Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.**—*The pupil of God:*—**I. AS THE AUDITOR OF GOD.** "The Lord came and stood." The Great Father

speaks to man in nature, in history, in moral reason, as well as in special revelations. This He does as in the case of Samuel. 1. Frequently. 2. Personally. Samuel's name was mentioned. God speaks to man, not in the mass, but in the individual. 3. Earnestly. Samuel's name is repeated, "Samuel, Samuel," indicating earnestness. God is earnest in His communications with men. "Doth not Wisdom cry? and Understanding put forth her voice?" Alas! though all men are "auditors," all men are not "earnest" listeners. We have humanity presented here—II. As THE PUPIL OF GOD. "Samuel answered, Speak; for Thy servant heareth." Samuel's conduct suggests three things—1. He became a pupil after having heard the Divine voice. The voice had spoken to him thrice before, but it is only now he has heard it as the voice of God. Before he thought it was the voice of Eli—the mere voice of a man. No man will ever become a pupil of God until he hears His voice as His voice. It is God's voice that rouses men to spiritual study. 2. He heard the Divine voice after having put himself in a right posture. 3. Having heard the Divine voice, he craved for further communications. "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." The man who really takes in one word from God, craves for another. God's word, really taken into the soul, does two things, (1) Intensifies its thirst for further communications. One sip of the stream leads to desires that only the ocean will satisfy. The other thing which God's word does when taken into the soul, (2) Widens his capacity for reception. Not only the more you have the more you desire; but the more you are capable of receiving. CONCLUSION.—Here are the relations which we all ought to sustain to God—auditors and pupils—listeners and students. (*Homilist.*) *The reality of revelation and the preparation for receiving it:*—Why did the Lord call Samuel four times before He told him what He had to tell him? 1. The plan which God adopted was well calculated to convince both Eli and Samuel that the call was no delusion. When God makes any important revelation, He always gives to the people concerned some means of assuring themselves that it is indeed He who is speaking. He takes care there shall be no reasonable ground for saying that the revelation is a mistake, a fancy, a delusion. 2. The call of Samuel would have failed in one of its objects, if Eli had not been convinced that it was from God. Eli was to be censured by it. The call of Samuel was therefore the first step towards superseding Eli, and putting another and more faithful person in his room. It was absolutely necessary therefore that Eli should be assured that Samuel's call was from God, and that it was the beginning of the fulfilment of God's threatenings against himself. And how could this be done more forcibly or more naturally than by allowing Samuel to mistake God's voice for Eli's, and bringing him to Eli's bedside in unsuspecting simplicity three times in the course of the night? 3. There was this great object in the delaying of the message communicated to Samuel, until he had been three times called by name,—that he was duly prepared to receive the message. If God had given him the message on the first occasion of calling him, Samuel might not have known what to make of a thing so utterly new and strange to him. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Voices of God:*—Samuel was called to be a prophet of God in a great crisis of Jewish history. His appearance was quieter and less dramatic than those of Moses and Elijah, but it was almost as momentous. 1. The commonwealth established by Moses came to an end with the weak administration of Eli. The pure theocracy of the government was superseded. 2. The religious revolution was equally decisive and momentous. The religious supremacy of the priest was superseded by that of the prophet. No change could be more momentous in its religious influence. The function of the prophet differs fundamentally from that of the priest, and appeals to entirely different feelings. Samuel was the first of the order of the prophets. Hence the call of Samuel was of exceptional significance and importance. Samuel was clearly one of those great men of manifold gifts and functions whom God raises up in great crises and for great services. He was not, like Moses, the founder of the economy, nor, like Elijah, its restorer. But he was its preserver through a revolution that had become inevitable. I. LIFE IS FULL OF VOICES OF GOD, ONLY WE LACK THE SPIRITUAL FACULTY WHICH DISCERNS THEM.—The responsibility of life lies in listening for Divine voices, and in the response to them that we give. We may cultivate the spiritual faculty that hears God's call, or we may make it obtuse. We may cherish God's call, or we may silence it; obey it, or rebel against it. 1. When we think of God's voice, we English Protestants probably think first

and most spontaneously of God's revelation of His will in the Bible. Be the Bible whence it may, it is the highest spiritual authority we possess. It reveals God as nothing else does. More distinctly, unequivocally, and emphatically than through any other medium, God appeals to us by it. The history of Christianity is mainly a history of the impressions and transformations which the teachings of the Bible have produced upon men. 2. There are again voices of God's providence, which, if we have docile hearts, if we listen for the "voice behind us," and watch for the guidance of God's eye, we shall not fail to recognise. 3. The instincts and yearnings of our own spiritual nature, again, are an unmistakable voice of God. Every faculty has its function, every yearning its satisfaction. What then is the satisfaction provided for my religious soul? Christianity loudly and eagerly replies, God, and Christ, and salvation, and heaven. This voice of God within tells us that we are more than the brutes that perish, that we are more than mere intellectual machines. A man has to do gross violence and outrage to his own nature, debauch it by sensual excesses, reason it down by hard logic, before he can disable or overpower its spiritual elements. Nay, when he has done his utmost, he has not destroyed, he has only over-borne them. Out of the very constitution of our nature a still small voice of God testifies to our spiritual and immortal being. 4. And to this religious nature God speaks by the motions and monitions of His Holy Spirit; awakening solicitudes, exciting desires, touching impulses. These we may either cherish or quench. 5. In moments of intellectual perplexity, for example, when speculative reason has baffled herself in trying to think out the mysteries of being and of God—amid this tempest and earthquake of intellectual strife the still small voice of the religious soul is heard—God's voice within us. So that the spiritual soul itself disallows the reasonings that would deny it. 6. In quieter and more thoughtful moods of life we hear the voice of God. In solitary ways, in quiet evening hours, in the sequestered chamber of sickness. 7. God has voices that reach us in crowds; distinct, perhaps loud, above every din of business, or clamour of strife, or song of revelry. 8. In moments of temptation, even, God's voice finds a tongue. In some lingering power of conscience, in some sensitive remnants of virtue, in some angel memories of a pious home and an innocent heart. 9. In times of sorrow God's voice comes to us, summoning us to faith in His rule, His purpose, His presence, and to patience and acquiescence in the sacrifice demanded of us. 10. Most terrible of all is it when the first voice of God that we seriously listen to is a sentence of doom. "I will judge thine house for the iniquity which thou knowest." Such voices of God have come to men. Our lives are full of voices of God, if we would but listen to them. It is not God's silence, it is our deaf ear that hinders every place from being eloquent with Divine meanings. 11. Again, at what unlikely times and in what unlikely places God may speak to us. Not always in churches, or in formal acts of worship, or on Sabbath days. 12. To what unlikely persons God's call comes. The lesson is not an easy one for the Church to learn. God will choose His own instruments. II. HOW THEN DO WE RESPOND TO GOD'S CALL?—Is not Samuel's answer, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth," in the childlike simplicity, faith, and submissiveness of it, a most beautiful and perfect type of what our answer should be? He did not demur or remonstrate, as even Moses did when sent to Pharaoh. Humility is seen as much in the implicit acceptance of a great mission as in apologetic excuses for not accepting it. True fidelity of service is simply to do whatever may seem to be duty. The responsibility is with him who calls us. How variously men respond to God's call! Even in those who obey it, what gradations of faith and submissiveness there are! Men may deal with God's call so insincerely that they may destroy their very power of recognising it, and come to confound it with mere human suggestion. Or else, recognising it to be such, they parley with it, pervert its meaning, resist it, silence it. How God speaks to individual souls! Our neighbours cannot hear His voice to us. Eli did not hear the call to Samuel. It is addressed only to our personal consciousness. He who sits by my side does not hear it. Sometimes we ourselves fail to recognise it at first. Samuel thought it the voice of Eli, as we may think it the mere word of a preacher. It may not be even a message, but only a call; "Samuel, Samuel;" vague and inciting. Upon our response to it, our inquisitiveness and our docility, it depends whether more shall be revealed to us. Oh, these voices of God, how they fill our life and make it solemn and great! What forms they take! What things they say! Upon our

capability and willingness to hear Him our spiritual life depends. So to dull and deaden our souls by evasions and evil passions, so that it becomes incapable of discerning voices of God, is to destroy its finer spiritual sense, to degrade and carnalize it. Of all the voices of human life none are so great and inspiring as voices of God. Nay, even grant them illusions,—the mere imaginations of spiritual feeling,—they are dreams of noble and inspiring things. For practical uses of life it is better to be led by imaginary voices to noble virtue, Divine sympathies, and immortal aspirations, than to be led by real voices to carnal indulgences. It was because Samuel so responded, that He who thus spake to the child, feeding the morning lamp of his life with the oil of piety and gladness, continued to speak to the man through all his after years, to be with him in every after experience, to preserve him in every after temptation and peril; very largely, no doubt, by the very memories and spiritual forces of his childhood.

III. THE RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE OF THE PASSIVE OR RECEPTIVE SIDE OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.—There is an active side of spiritual life which exerts power, and there is a passive side that receives it; just as the body receives food for its nourishment, and puts forth energy as the result of it. I kneel down to pray; I put my soul into a receptive attitude: I open my heart to spiritual influences; I surrender myself to quiet musings; I cherish thoughts about Divine things; I nurture spiritual affections; I solicit into strength and fruitfulness the seeds of things that I have received. This is the passive side of my spiritual life. These are the vital processes that make me a spiritual man, holy, devout, loving. But I also go forth to do things; to teach, to work, to serve, to speak to others the thought that is in me, to proffer to others the help that love prompts, to embody before others the holy principles and feelings that have been generated within me. This is the active side of my spiritual life. The one is God working within me, filling me with His presence and love; the other is my working for God, filling the earth with the godliness that I have realised, ministering the grace I have received. Every true life realises both. If either be wanting, life is impossible; if either be in excess, life is maimed. The religious history of the world is full of instances of mere zeal and self-will, working, even in God's service, extremest evil. The Church needs Christian workers, consecrated lives, vigorous hands; "the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few." In a thousand forms evil has to be encountered and counteracted. It is a great grace for a man to be willing to serve God in any way, for him to be converted from the service of the devil to the service of Christ. It is an eventful crisis in a man's history when he first submits himself to Christ. But it is not all at once that he subordinates to Christ all his feelings and purposes. His excited zeal would fain be doing. He has no conception that is not doing. He can scarcely be kept from abandoning business altogether. He does not wait to hear God speak. He takes for granted that God has only one thing to say to him—to bid him throw himself into the thickest of the fight. Young life is characteristically energetic. Its strength is not to sit still. Different states of society, different ages of the Church, have different characteristics and perils. Our fathers developed the thoughtful, reflective side of the Christian life. We fill the world with our Christian agencies, and our life with strenuous endeavours. Nor may we say that too much is done: the world needs it all. But perhaps we suffer in the completeness of our spiritual life. The balance inclines unduly. Are we not too busy for thoughtfulness—almost for quiet communion with God. There is therefore a sense in which we need to preach, not so much activity as the lessening of it. Our life runs to leaf. How much is said in Scripture about this devotional side of spiritual life, its aspect towards God, its vital union with Christ, its dependence upon Him! "As I live by the Father, so ye also shall live by Me." This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter—that in the activities of our zeal we do not forget its inspirations in God; that we keep open the heavenward gates of our souls; that while with one hand we do battle with evil, or build the temple of God, with the other we clasp the cross. The more entire our spirit of dependence, the more effective the work we do. Our greatest sanctities, our greatest elevations of thought and feeling, our greatest impulses, come from our communion with God. The nearer to Him we live, the fuller we shall be of His light and goodness and love. The men who have done the most for God are men who have stood in Samuel's attitude, and said with Samuel's submissiveness, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *Childhood a prophecy*:—I. AS EXPRESSING

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN HEART FOR A REVELATION OF THE DIVINE.—Sooner or later that cry will be heard in us all. The thirst for happiness, the desire for certainty, the craving for fuller life, the thinker's search for uniting general ideas, are all longings for God. This cry cannot be satisfied by nature and its teaching, or by the voice of authority, or tradition, or reason, or the church. 1. We are sinful beings. How shall we know that we are personally forgiven and accepted, unless the voice of God speak in us? 2. We are solitary beings. We need a Divine Presence. How know that Presence is with us unless God's voice speak in us? 3. We are students of truth. How shall we be convinced that Christ is Divine, and ever the Leader and King of men, unless the voice of His spirit in us attest His claims? 4. We are undeveloped beings. The highest and best energies of the soul only utter themselves as God's voice calls them into consciousness, and service, and co-operation. 5. We are responsible beings. 6. We are immortal. In life, in death, in duty, in joy, our hearts cry, "Speak, Lord." "Be not silent unto me." II. GOD ANSWERS THIS CRY, BUT IN AN UNEXPECTED MANNER.—We settle upon persons, places, times, and modes for God to speak. He upsets the folly of our pre-judgments. 1. Samuel's cry is the result of the Divine voice to him first. 2. God calls the child, not Eli. He speaks to life, not years. The child has a right to hear God. He speaks ever to the childlike. 3. He calls the child in the night. Samuel must go into the solemn night, alone to hear the voice. How brave and fearless is the child-heart. 4. He calls him by a human voice. He cannot tell it from Eli's. There are tones of love, and sorrow, and tenderness in it. So with Christ, the form of the voice is human, its substance is Divine. 5. He calls the child to receive the message of law and judgment. A good discipline to begin with. Law, stern and inflexible, yet beneficent, pervades love. Duty first, then privilege and comfort. 6. Eli has to complete the attitude of Samuel to God. The best part of Eli appears here—his selfishness, his sympathy with Samuel. This is the use of all teachers, churches; not to demand our listening to them, but to send us to solitary converse with God. Often the representative of an outgoing school of thought has denied to the new voices the Divinity of which they are full. Eli was better. III. THE DIVINE VOICE IS AUDIBLE ONLY TO LOWLY OBEDIENCE. (*J. Matthews.*) *God's call to Samuel*.—I. THE SLEEP.—You may think of Samuel as now a boy about twelve years of age. The night was far advanced. The golden candlestick with its seven lamps, in the Holy Place, had not yet gone out, as it usually did about the time when the morning began to dawn. Its light shone on all the sacred things. That night God was present in a special manner. He was near to Samuel. But to Samuel it was as if none of these things had been; he was all unconscious of them—for he was asleep. There is, 1. The Sleep of Carelessness.—Some mothers tell me about their boys, that they are not bad-hearted, and that what they have to complain of, is not so much want of heart, as want of thought. They never seem to think. And the consequence is, everything goes wrong. I cannot tell how bad, how dangerous that is, what damage it has done—want of thought. Though their eyes are open, their minds are asleep. It is the sleep of carelessness. Some young people go to church who never listen to what is said—who never hear what is said. I very much fear there are many young people who never think about God, or the soul, or their pressing danger, or the way of salvation. 2. There is what I might call the Sleep of Sin. This is in some respects worse than the other. At first, conscience is uncomfortable, uneasy, and they think they will never do the wrong thing again. But when the sin is repeated time after time, conscience becomes quiet, the heart gets hard, and at length there is sound sleep, so that nothing frightens, nothing alarms. 3. There is the Sleep of Security. Security does not mean safety. It means the sense of supposed safety, and is sometimes the most dangerous state of all. II. GOD'S AWAKENING CALL.—There are various ways of awaking sleeping people. Sometimes a call will do it; sometimes a gentle tap at the door; sometimes a loud knock. 1. There is God's call in the Word. This is what most, and most effectually, He uses. Strange and unlikely messages have proved words of awakening to some, rousing the sleeper thoroughly out of his slumbers. Often it is the simple story of Jesus' love—His coming and dying for sinners. 2. There is God's call in Providence. III. THE LYING DOWN AGAIN.—In Samuel's case, this was all right and good. He was an unusually dutiful child. Whenever he was called, up he sprang, and that again and again. In the case of most the lying

down again is fatal. The second sleep is likely to be sounder than the first, and to lie down again, when once awakened, is of all things the most foolish. Sometimes, when God awakens, and there is much anxiety and fear—a desire to be saved, and a willingness to do anything to get salvation. We get quit of our anxiety and fear, and try to throw off our good impressions, and are ashamed to have been so much concerned. Friends often say to us, "Go, lie down again:" not that they would do us any harm, but, like Eli at first, they do not know that the voice that is calling us is the voice of God. Satan always says, "Go, lie down again;" for he does not wish us to be saved. And many yield to the temptation. IV. GOD'S CALL RECOGNISED AND ANSWERED.—All the three earlier times, "Samuel did not yet know the Lord." (*J. H. Wilson.*) *Vocation*:—The call to Samuel is an extreme and vivid instance of a truth of which the Bible is full; the truth that we are all called of God to our several places and occasions of action or of passion, of working or of waiting in the world; in a word, that we all have a vocation. We hardly need the Bible to tell us this, for it is one of the simplest truths of natural religion. The evidences of providential purpose in the world have been criticised in every age. But they have proved too strong to be upset by criticism, and still remain as they have ever been, among our most necessary forms of thought. And as man is the climax of the visible creation, we naturally expect the purpose which is so abundantly visible elsewhere, to obtain also in the life of man. He too must have a purpose, and to be created for a purpose is, in the case of a free being, to be called to its fulfilment. The New Testament takes up and intensifies this thought; addressing Christians as "the called of Jesus Christ," "called to be saints," "called according to God's purpose," "called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord," "called out of the darkness," "called to liberty." Now it hardly needs saying that, for all its naturalness and scriptural authority, we are too apt to forget this thought. Let us consider the details of the call of Samuel to his life's work. Circumstances, as we say, but circumstances of which a mother's prayer was part, determine the sphere in which that work is to be done. "The child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest." Then comes the Divine voice calling him by name; calling him out of the many possibilities of an office which he shared with such men as Eli's sons, to his own especial and high prophetic destiny. We are not all called to be prophets, but we are called, in our varying ways, to minister to the Lord; and we may learn from this typical history how to recognise and answer our call. We are apt to lead aimless lives, and shift the blame of them on to our circumstances; but circumstances, to a believer in God, are providential, and meant to determine and not to divert our aim. Parents' wishes, constitutional temperament, intellect, rank, wealth, poverty, obscurity, the books we read, the friends we form, family claims, or unexpected opportunities in the opening days of life—these are the things that decide for us the main outlines of our career. And it is very easy to imagine that they are all happy or unhappy accidents, importing at the very outset a character of chance into all that we do. But such a view is only born of the shallow philosophy that sees nothing in the universe but a chaos of shifting sand. And it is in the presence of such feeling that a belief in vocation comes to our help. For that belief gives us a clue to the right interpretation of our circumstances, and leads us to ponder over them with prayer. As we do so we are no longer content to drift idly before them, or to turn and go away in a rage because we are not bidden to do some great thing. But external circumstances need for their interpretation the inner guidance of the voice of God; and to hear that voice we must be listening with the obedient expectation in which Samuel said, "Speak; for Thy servant heareth." It is too readily assumed that such interior calls come only to the favoured few who are predestined to exceptional careers. They are ways in which God, the Holy Ghost, chooses the weak things of the world to confound the wise; flashing on the mind in an instant, through some chance thought, or sight, or sound, the conviction of His nearness, and the message of His will. But real as these inner intimations of the Divine purpose often are, they need to be received with care. And here again the case of Samuel comes before us. The voice which called him was interpreted by Eli. "Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child." And all our secret inspirations need a similar process of testing, in the light of our own experience or that of others. What, then, is a divine vocation? It is a call from the world, in its evil sense, to God.

These are its two essential characteristics. First, detachment, or sacrifice. When the rich young man was bidden to sell all that he had and give to the poor, the involved sacrifice was obvious. But though less obvious, the sacrifice need not be less real in the case of those whose undoubted vocation is to accept the responsibility of a great inheritance. Secondly, attachment. Vocation is a call to God, and not merely a call to labour. It is a common mistake to regard our work as leading us to God, rather than God as leading us to our work. But the latter is the true order of vocation. God calls us to himself, and then sends us to labour in His vineyard. If we sever our moral life from its spiritual root—its root is the Father of Spirits—and confine our thoughts to any kind of merely moral practice, however noble, we are liable by degrees to be too absorbed in our work, to over-estimate its importance and our own importance as its agents, to be unduly discouraged by failure or sudden avocation. Meanwhile, our work itself will lack the note of perfectness which spirituality alone can give, and be either outwardly ungracious or inwardly unreal. Whereas if we regard morality as a function of the spiritual life, and conduct as the consequence and not the cause of character, the natural and necessary outcome and expression of the inner man, all things will fall into their proper place. For the work which flows instinctively from character is not only more perfect in kind; but there is, in reality, more of it. It has a wider and more varied scope. In fact, it is incessant; since a character is always working. And, further, while action divorced from character contains no principle of growth, and at best can only increase in quantity, remaining monotonously same in kind, a spiritual character is for ever growing in refinement and intensity and grace, and consequently issuing in a higher quality of conduct. "My son, give Me thy heart" is the universal form of all vocation. This is the essence of vocation; and it naturally issues in a reality and earnestness of life which nothing else can give. Without it men may be in earnest for a time, but their earnestness will rarely survive failure, much less such repeated failure as is our common human lot. But the man with a sense of vocation is beyond all this. For he neither depends upon success or failure, nor doubts the real value of his work. Like the Pompeian sentinel, come what may, he will stay on duty till his guard is relieved. He works not for achievement, but for obedience, and rests not when he is tired, but when he is told. Nor does this temper of mind, as is sometimes thought, lead to dull and mechanical working. On the contrary, the man with a vocation is the truest individual. For in his degree he reflects God, and no two beings can reflect God in the same way. Indolence is always commonplace. Imitation is its favourite method. And the more selfish men become either in their personal or collective aims, the more drearily they resemble one another. No two saints were ever alike. And this the man with a true sense of vocation feels. He gives himself up to God in confidence that the Maker of the human soul alone knows the capabilities of His own instrument, and can alone bring out its music. And he is justified by the result. Native individuality alone will not do this. It may start with a flash and a lustre, but succumbs in time to the deadening custom of the world, "the set gray life, and apathetic end"—one more instance of the epigram that "we are all born originals and die copies." But vocation, while it emphasises our originality, supports us under its loneliness with the sense of being upheld from above. Again there are degrees and stages of vocations—vocations within vocations. Theology is a matter of vocation. And then there is the missionary call, of which we hear from all sides of the need. (J. R. Illingworth, M.A.) *Present day inspiration*:—Does God speak to our children to-day as He did to this lad Samuel? I do not ask does God speak to us in an audible voice, and in dictionary English. For you know well enough that the form is not, and never can be, of the essence of a message. Methods are details. Spiritual impulse and enlightenment, life and power, are all in all, the Alpha and Omega of Inspiration. "There are," says Goethe, "many echoes in the world, but few voices." Revelation is rare. Inspiration is common. Revelation is unique and original. Inspiration may issue only in an echo to him who listens, but in what is a living and new experience to him who speaks. So far as I can gather, Samuel, though inspired so as to become the first in the regular succession of the prophets of Israel, received no new truth, saw no facts going beyond the first principles of religion taught by Moses; but he grasped those truths with a reality and clearness all his own. With deep solicitude, then, we enquire, what are the facts? Is

there, or is there not, a Present Day Inspiration? No doubt the prophets of God were exceptional men. All are not apostles. All are not prophets. All do not work miracles. All have not gifts of healing. Every Greek is not a Plato in philosophical insight, an Aristotle in reasoning, or a Pericles in eloquence and political capacity. Every Italian is not a Dante in song. Every Englishman is not a Shakespeare in dramatic genius, a Macaulay in historical portrait-painting, or a Pitt in statesmanship. Every singer is not a Beethoven or a Mozart. Every Christian is not a Luther. Even amongst the prophets of the Old Testament there are greater and lesser lights. But in God's world, the exceptional is always the evangelistic. Divinely-anointed men preach the Gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, deliver the captives, and herald the arrival of the acceptable year of the Lord. God never makes any man for himself, least of all a prophet. But supposing we had a lingering doubt as to the teaching of the Older Testament, we cannot have any misgiving as to the fact that Christ asserts over and over again the doctrine of the continuity of Inspiration. It is His consolation among the irritations and disquiet of opposition and defeat, that His Father reveals the truth of His Kingdom, to the open, clinging, and trustful hearts of "babes" like young Samuel. A third line of inquiry is open to us, taking us back in some sense upon our first and second. It is this. Are the results of Samuel's Inspiration possible to us, or is there anything forbidding us to entertain the thought of entering into the goodly fellowship of the prophets? We know we may walk with God as did Enoch, preach righteousness with Noah, become the children of Abraham in heroic faith and total surrender of will, fight against ourselves with Jacob, battle for social purity with Joseph, assist in building God's house with Moses, share the strength of Samson, and drink the pure streams of domestic joy with Ruth and Naomi; is it likely then we are shut out from the enjoyment of the sublimest issues of the inspiration of the Spirit of God? Those issues, as seen in the life and work of Samuel, are these four; an enlarged and purified conception of God; a strong and governing sway for ethical ideas of God and of life; a contagious impulsion of others towards God and righteousness; and a fine susceptibility of advance in religious, social, and national activity. Samuel knew the Lord through the word of the Lord revealed to him. God spake to him, and the speech was a revelation of the Speaker. To know God—not so as to define Him, but to enjoy Him; not so as to demonstrate His being, but to live in and by His love and power; not so as to comprehend Him, but to trust and follow Him; this is the gift of the Spirit. Next in gravity and in fruitfulness, we see in this inspired hero a moral illumination, an inflexible fidelity to his vocation, and an uncompromising adherence to eternal ethical principles, which infallibly assert his intimate fellowship with a righteous God. He begins his youthful ministry by the delivery of a pain-filled message, asserting the unrelaxed operation of the laws of God on the rapacity and profligacy of the sons of Eli, a man of saintly devoutness and religious fervour, but a father of foolish leniency and unpardonable weakness. Samuel, young as he is—a mere lad—tells his story every whit, omits not a word from fear for himself, or weak consideration for the feelings of Israel's Judge. So noble a courage has its fitting crown in the stern demand for absolute obedience to God he makes on King Saul, and his intrepid refusal to accept any shuffles and excuses for a self-willed defiance of the authority of the God of Israel. "To obey," says he, rising to the loftiest heights of the sun-filled realm of truth, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "The Lord let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground," for they were a part of that truth which, however slowly it be revealed, when once here, endureth to all generations. Samuel, like his successors, was a prophet-politician. His chief care was the common weal. He saw a people weak and disunited, foolish and fractious, licentious and profligate, idolatrous and corrupt; and with glowing intensity of emotion and ringing eloquence he sent out his manifesto against the reigning idolatry, re-asserted the second great commandment against the worship of images, urged repentance and searching of heart, and confederated the tribes together on the basis of a true idea of God, a spiritual worship, and a faithful keeping of the law of righteousness. Every true and consecrated prophet is an earnest patriot, acutely alive to the real perils of his country, sympathetic with all its struggles for a purer morality, a higher culture, and a richer joy; and heartily co-operates in every effort that illumines right, extends liberty, and brings men to God. Love of men, evinced in practical

service of their wide interests, is the sign and proof of the anointing of God. Hence the inspired man is always in the van of progress. He does not and cannot lag behind. Even though it be against his immediate interests, and in the face of his cherished methods and associations, yet he triumphs over himself and carries forward movements in which "the old order changeth, yielding place to new." No inspired man can be a frozen pendant, a blind dry-as-dust, a galvanized corpse, frantically clutching at yesterday as though it were better than to-day, and talking of God as though He had revealed Himself as the "I was," instead of the "I am." The breath of the Almighty lifts him out of the darkness of a selfish stagnation and makes him the harbinger of the coming day. Therefore, not even our depressing sense of mistake, our mist-bound ideas, our feeling that God has cramped dwelling in our souls, should hinder us from believing in, working for, and hastening to, a present-day Inspiration. Each element of this four-fold result bears witness to a universal need, and to a possible universal experience: prophecies that "when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment;" be "poured out on all flesh," so that all flesh may see the full salvation of God. Irresistible as this answer is, it only forces on us a further question, scarcely less perplexing, viz., how may we be sure that the voice that speaks within us is the voice of God, and not of self; that the impressions, ideas, and convictions are the result of Divine inspiration, and not the subtle temptations of evil, or the disguised promptings of a foolish and fevered fancy? Ay, there's the rub! That's the insuperable difficulty! Fortunately for us this is not a new problem. It is as old as the other. The Jews of Berea had to face it with less light than we have, for they were invited to pass into a new realm of thought and action, and required an unerring guide. Paul and Silas preached the Word concerning Christ to them, and they received it with all openness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily whether these things were so; many of them, therefore, believed. They went at once to the best test they had; used the supreme verifying process then in existence, looked into the Hebrew accounts of the manifestation of God in the past; compared them with that which was reported to them by the missionaries, and entered into rest and power. Now we have this advantage over the Bereans, that the Scriptures are larger for us than they were for them. We can take all the movements of the Spirit of God in our hearts to-day to Christ, to see whether they are in accordance with His Spirit and teaching, with His redeeming purpose and kingdom, with His sacrifice and ethics; with His character and Ideal. He is our infallible test. Yet another question. If this gift of the Spirit be open to all souls, and this test be so easy of application, why is it that Samuel, of all the lads in Israel, hears the Divine Voice, and no one else; that Isaiah and Paul are inspired, and so many of their contemporaries are not? Why? Well, why did mathematics and colours speak with such captivating sweetness to the mind of Clerk Maxwell? Why did music penetrate and sway the soul of young Mozart? Why could not Flaxman rest in his father's shop without modelling and sketching? Why did Augustine hear the summons falling on his ear as he walked in the orchards at Tagaste; "Take and read, Take and read"? Look into their minds, and you will find the same law at work. Scientific things are scientifically discerned; musical things are musically discerned; artistic things are artistically discerned; and spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Their natures and training offered the appropriate organs and conditions, and the inspiration followed. To the fitting organ for hearing there comes the guiding Voice of God. Few "cases" more vividly illustrate this law than Samuel's. At least six signs of fitness show themselves: his godly descent: his devout dedication for life to the service of God; his early spiritual training; his pre-eminent prayerfulness; his glowing love of God; and his unflinching obedience to the Divine will. If, then, any of us lack the strength of a daily inspiration, and who does not? let him ask of God, with a fully dedicated spirit, an intense yearning to glorify God, a total suppression of selfish desire, and a sustained doing of all the Will of God, and He will do exceeding abundant above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, even the power of the risen Christ, Who hath already given us of His Spirit. (*J. Clifford, M.A.*) *Spiritual surrender for children*:—1. To begin with, there is indicated here, as a part of this boy's experience, the exercise of unquestioning obedience. 2. In the experience of Samuel we observe, in the second place, there was the attitude of listening. 3. Then next in the experience of Samuel we observe there is a spirit of

reverence. 4. There is the apprehension of obligation. So whenever Christ comes by His Spirit into contact with a young life there is the bending of the will into desire for service. 5. There is the temper of submission. The entire surrender of the soul is reached in that word "heareth." This young child was offering himself most unconsciously to a duty immediate and pressing, but indescribably hard. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *God's calling of Samuel*:—

I. WITH RESPECT TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS DIVINE CALL, THERE ARE, IT IS TRUE, SOME DIFFERENCES, WHILST THERE ARE CERTAINLY ALSO SOME RESEMBLANCES, BETWEEN HIS CASE AND YOURS. We may refer to, 1. Some of these differences. (1.) It is quite true that none of you are called in a miraculous way like Samuel. (2.) It is also true that God now calls none of you by name as he did Samuel. (3.) Nor are you called, like Samuel, to be inspired prophets. The code of Revelation is finished. 2. Resemblances between the circumstances of the call of Samuel and yours. (1.) Are not some here, like Samuel, children of many prayers. (2.) Like Samuel, "lent unto the Lord." (3.) You are all young like Samuel. (4.) Called like Samuel at an important crisis in the history of the Church of God. 4. Have not all of you, like Samuel, been called repeatedly?

II. WITH RESPECT TO THE REALITY OF THE DIVINE CALL THERE IS A PERFECT PARITY IN BOTH CASES.—1. The Bible you allow to be the Word of God. (2.) It contains appeals addressed to you. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them" (Eccle. xii. 1). (*Evangelical Preacher*.) *Obedient to the voice of God*:—I. THE LORD SPEAKING. "But does God speak to me?" you ask. 1. Yes, he does, in His Providence. In this land of Sabbaths, and churches, and Bibles, and Christians, God is always speaking to you. Did He not speak to you in the first human voice that reached your infant mind? And did not God speak to you in that illness? 2. And God speaks to you by His word. For His word is not like the word of a man in a book, a dull, dead thing: but in it you may hear God's living voice. 3. And God speaks to you by His Spirit. II. THE CHILD HEARING. Your ear is one of the main gateways of the soul. A man of science calls it "a harp of three hundred strings," and it is made up of many wonders. But far more wonderful is the inner ear of the heart, or the conscience, by which you hear the noiseless voice of God. You have great power over the ear of the body; you may spoil it, close it, or improve it. Oh, have you a good ear for this music? It is astonishing how quick the ear grows to hear anything we wish to hear. An Indian, by laying his ear to the ground, and hushing his breath, can discover the approach of a horseman at the distance of miles. His ear is as quick as the ear of the hare, or of the deer. A sleeping mother will hear the gentlest movement of her suffering child, and awake to help it. Her mother's love calls her listening soul into her ear: her heart makes her all ear. Thus the ear within the soul may be trained to know even the gentlest whisperings of God's voice.

III. THE CHILD SERVING. "Thy servant," he called himself. 1. His obedience was prompt. He might have said, "Oh, I'm frightened in the dark: there must be some mistake: I'll keep my warm bed this cold night." He was prompt in obeying Eli's voice (as he thought it) and God's. 2. Samuel's obedience was also hearty: he put his whole heart into it. The trembling slave obeys promptly, but not heartily. He does his task at once, but would gladly not do it, if he dared. We cannot obey God till we really love Him. 3. Notice also that Samuel's obedience was life-long. There is the closest connection between the heartiness and the continuance of our service. (*J. Wells, M.A.*) *Answering God*:—In order to distinguish the voice and message of God there is requisite—

I. A DISENGAGED MIND. When the attention is absorbed by one object there is no room for another. II. AN UNBIASED INTELLIGENCE. Our own selfishness, conceit, and prejudice, both collectively and individually combine to prevent our hearing and regarding the truth, in its fulness and entirety. We want to speak and argue, as well as hear. III. AN EARNEST EXPECTATION. IV. A SENSE OF HUMILITY. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." This implies that we hear in order to do. God will never give His counsel to the haughty and the proud. V. A PERSONAL INDIVIDUAL COMMUNION. It is the want of the personal union to God that keeps us in the dark and hides His light from our souls. (*Homilist*.) *Listening to God*:—Or, rather, "Thy servant is listening." If, as we have read this story, I wonder if we have thought of the strange feeling of awe that was beating in that little heart that night? I wonder if there is any significance in the fact that Samuel did not say just what Eli told him to? Eli said, "Say, speak, Lord, for

Thy servant heareth;" but Samuel could not get quite courage enough to say Lord; he was not quite sure that it was the Lord that was speaking to him, and so all he says is, "Speak; for Thy servant heareth." How that heart must have beat, how that awe must have possessed him, as it came to him that he was really face to face with Jehovah! And yet, familiar as we are with this story, I do not think its lesson has sunk down very deep into most of our hearts; for that lesson seems to me to be this: That there are times when we are not to talk to God, and not to do anything for God, but just to listen to God. A great proportion of you are doing some work for God; most of you, I hope, more or less regularly pray to God; but how many of you have ever formed the habit of listening to God? You see the difference. We know the full man, the ready man, the overflowing man whom we meet in social intercourse, who is so full of his message to us that he has no time to get our message back again; who talks with such a stream of conversation that it is hardly possible for us to get in a word in reply. There is no conversation with such a man, there is only listening to him. You have met that man; perhaps you are that man yourself. He is a very full man, but he does not know how to get the message of the world. He does not know how to take in as well as to give out. The wise man carries both minds with him, the giving mind and the receiving mind, and the wisest man makes more of the receiving even than the giving. But at other times you do not take up a theme for study, but you sit down in your easy chair and light your evening lamp; the wind is howling and you are sure that you are going to have that night no interruption; and you take your Browning, or your Shakespeare, or your Carlyle, or your Tennyson, or your Whittier, and you do not study, you simply let your favourite author talk to you, and after he has spoken to you for ten or fifteen minutes the book drops into your lap and you begin to think his thoughts. These hours in which we simply listen to what the men of genius have to say to us, are they not the most fruitful hours of our life? Have we not received more in those hours than we received when our dictionary and our grammar and our treatise were before us and we were digging for wisdom as for a hid treasure? Yes, these receptive hours are our best hours. I know there are persons who think that God speaks no more to men: He did speak once to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to Isaiah, to Paul, but there came a time when the canon was closed, and inspiration was stopped, and God became silent, and man lost his power of hearing. Strange, was it not, if it were true, that God should have spoken to one little section of the race and no other section, to one little epoch and to no other; strange, if He is the Father and we are the children, that He should have talked to those children in far-away times and have nothing to say to us children in this present time! I do not believe it. I believe God speaks to His children now. I cannot see how there can be a true, real religion without this faith. This faith underlies obedience. How can I obey the will of God if God never shows His will to me? How can I have faith in a present, living God, who never speaks to me? Sometimes He comes to us as He came to Balaam. We have set our own purpose before us; we have resolved what we will do; we have not been careful to take counsel and consider whether this is the thing God wants us to do. A great reward, a great honour, a great advantage, beckons, and we start out on our path to do our will, resolved to reap our reward, and we come against some obstacle, something that stops our way, and we are angry, vexed—we will sweep it out of the way and all the time it is the Angel of the Lord standing before us, barring our progress. And we cannot, do not, will not, see or listen. Sometimes He comes to us as He came to Saul of Tarsus; conscientious, really thinking he was doing God's service, and yet so bent on his own notion of what's God's service was. Sometimes He comes to us as He came to Elijah. We have tried to do God's will—tried, but have failed; all our work has come to naught, and we are utterly discouraged. Sometimes it comes to us as it came to Moses; comes in the voice and ministry of nature, in some wonderful phenomenon in nature. Sometimes He comes to us as He came to Isaiah in the Temple. Sometimes He comes to us as He came to Peter and James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. I wish I could carry you back to your childhood; I wish I could make you remember the school desk and the teacher, or the mother instructing you out of the primer or out of the Bible; and when I had made those memories pass before you in a panoramic vision, I would bring, last of all, the evening hour when the mother took you. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) Samuel, the young prophet:—Samuel has just completed his twelfth year. Against this por-

trait of young Samuel our lesson unveils the picture of the age in which he lived. It was one of priestly corruption and spiritual dryness. To worshipping shepherds, to praying Johns, to kneeling Stephens, to clinging Jacobs, to repentant Davids, to obedient Samuels, God communicates his truths. Do not find fault with God because He seems to withhold truth from you. Do not criticise the preacher for commonplace utterances nor call your prayer-meeting stupid. First look into your own heart and life and know whether or not you are in condition to see the truth when presented. The responsibility of the preacher of Christ and of Christian bodies for a spiritual drought is very evident from the story before us. We need heavenly living to receive heavenly visions. In this day of withheld revelation, when the lips of prophecy were sealed and the people heard no sounds from the heavens, God called Samuel. If it seems remarkable that he should select one so young in years, we are to remember that God never gives one a duty until he is fitted to perform it. He saw in this Hebrew youth the qualities of mind and spirit which he desired in his prophet. Years do not qualify men for great deeds. Holy living is the first condition of honour from God. God wants men, holy men. He asks neither for youth nor age. He does ask for holy manhood. Samuel met this condition, and therefore God called him. He was glad to be a servant in the tabernacle. He had the spirit of service. He chose God's service, not a place in that service. That he left God to decide. Samuel was usable of God. His spirit of obedience is evident. When the voice called, he cried: "Here am I." There is something unusual in this spirit. He was ready to try, with God's help, to do what God wished. He was trustfully obedient, like Abraham and Joshua and Paul. His was the obedience that ran. The obedience that lingers with leaden feet never receives the prophet's rod and mantle. It is interesting to note that "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." He certainly knew God as every trustful, loving heart knows Him, and God's word was his law. He did not, however, know him through the medium of a special revelation. Before he could enter upon his special work as a prophet or even know it was to be his, a special communication from God to him was necessary. No man ever yet succeeded who took up a special work for God on general principles. We are called to the work He desires us to do. In some way God draws near us in special revelation, communicating His will. In this special revelation God "came." The word means "presented Himself." The calling was not a mere impression or dream of Samuel's. He heard a voice and then beheld the vision. He recognised his God. "Speak; for thy servant heareth." There was no doubt, no confusion in his mind regarding the nature of the occurrence. In God's service we are not left to act upon impressions nor to the guidance of dreams. We meet a living presence. God came, and God comes to men. He meets us at every turn on life's road. He gives us such special revelations of Himself as we may require. We talk not into a mysterious darkness, but in the ear of our God. We are left not to the mercy of fancies, but are guided by an all-wise and loving Father. In sharp contrast with the exaltation of Samuel to this prophetic life and his vision of Jehovah is the picture of Eli's house. His sons are dissolute. They have degraded their important office and brought reproach in some way upon the name and worship of God. For Samuel to disclose to Eli the sad future of himself and his family was no easy task. It was the beginning of his cross-bearing as the prophet of God. It is worthy to be noticed, as an illustration of the frankness of God's dealings with us, that he never deceives us as to the nature of our duties. On the very threshold of his new life Samuel met this delicate and trying task. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Samuel; or, God's wrath upon His Church:*—We may look upon this Divine call of Samuel as the beginning of a new order of things in Israel. The high priest had, from the occupation of Canaan, been the medium of communication from God to the people. He wore the Urim and Thummim in the breastplate, and from these was able to receive answers from God to questions concerning duty. But the degeneracy of Israel, in which the high priests seem to have participated to a degree, rendered a change necessary. The high priest is made secondary, and the prophet is raised up as the primary authority in Israel. The prophet will now be the mouth of God to the people. If the Church makes a god of its forms, he breaks those forms to pieces. When the ritual priesthood failed in their duty, he punished them, and set up an order of prophets above them to be the interpreters of his will. Samuel is thus a witness to God's demand for a spiritual religion in contrast to mere form. God is a holy God, and He will have

His people holy; and if they substitute a ceremonial for holiness, His holy wrath will certainly fall upon them; and in this blow not only those will fall who, like Eli's sons, commit gross wrongs, but those also who, like Eli, through indulgence or apathy, fail to rebuke and resist the evil. The Church of God is to-day courting the world. Its members are trying to bring it down to the level of the ungodly. The ball, the theatre, nude and lewd art, social luxuries with all their loose moralities, are making inroads into the sacred enclosure of the Church. God will not bless a Church that drags down His heavenly things into the dust—that gilds vice, calls it Christian, and then indulges in it. But His holy vengeance will assuredly come and strip such a Church of its pride and make it eat the bread of affliction. (*H. Crosby, D.D.*) *Youth the repository of Divine judgment*:—I. NIGHT VISIONS. We might suggest several reasons why night was selected as the season of this vision:—1. It was calm and silent. 2. It would lend impressiveness to the call. It being unusual to hear a voice at midnight, earnest attention would be secured, and reverent awe inspired. 3. It was also consistent with the event announced. What time more appropriate for the utterance of tidings so terrible as darkness, whose gloom would also be prophetic of the future? 4. To show that God works at the most unlikely times, independent of external and natural aid. In fact, when we look upon the dead horses and unblown trumpets of Sennacherib's defeat, on the desolation caused in Egypt by the withering breath of the destroying angel, we feel in the presence of this principle that when nature and mortals slumber, God is most active. 1. In what the vision consisted. "And the Lord called" (ver. 4). What a deep impression would this night's transaction make upon Samuel's mind! Hence, by this vision, he was conducted to advanced experiences, of which the two most prominent thoughts would be the woeful destiny of evil, and the judicial majesty of God. These communications were (1) Astonishing; (2) of widespread interest (ver. 11); not merely was the lightning to scathe a willow by the stream hut an oak near the palace. The doom predicted was (3) Inevitable. Rendered so (a) By Divine oath (ver. 14) (b) By a strict refusal of compromise (ver. 14). 2. To whom entrusted. The Lord called Samuel (ver. 4). Childhood vocal on the lips of God. Devoted childhood honoured by God. Compare. "In those days there was no open vision" (ver. 1). "And the Lord called yet again, Samuel." 3. Honestly mistaken. "And he ran unto Eli" (ver. 5). Have we not in the cheerful obedience of this young servant a pattern for all stations of service? (1) It was prompt; "he ran." (2) It was responsive; "Here am I." (3) It was deferential; "for thou calledst me." Samuel mistook the Divine call for the human; this is the greatest tendency of the present day, to expunge the miraculous, not only from the records of inspiration, but also from the events of general life. Mistaken childhood instructed (ver. 7). It is the duty of old persons, and especially old priests, to instruct the young. 4. Obediently received (ver. 10). "Speak, for thy servant heareth." Samuel omits the word "Lord," which Eli had instructed him to use. His youthful nature had not yet grasped its meaning; the doctrine of the Divine Lordship was too deep a mystery, he stood before it in silence, daring not to vocalize such an attribute of majesty. Every impulse of his heart cried out, "Speak," and Samuel signified himself attentive to the message; "thy servant heareth." II. MORNING DISCLOSURES. Samuel enters upon the duties of the day with a heavier heart than usual, trying as much as possible to avoid contact with Eli, lest he should be questioned respecting the call of the previous night. What contrasts do the Christian life present! He "opened the doors of the house of the Lord" (ver. 15). The revelation of woe had not caused him to forget his duty, or filled him with pride to disdain it. Here we catch a glimpse of the greatness of his young nature, that it could walk amidst this splendour with such unconscious simplicity. The vision was:—1. Timidly retained (ver. 16, 17). "And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision." Probably he had received no command from God to disclose it, and feared lest he should intrude upon the threshold of the Divine prerogative. Perhaps he discreetly considered that the tidings would be too astounding, that Eli's feeble energies, like the drooping plant, would succumb to the fury of the storm; feeling also a respect for and a sympathy with the unfortunate Priest, knowing that God had irrevocably signed his death warrant, Samuel did not wish to embitter the final hours by heedless, useless sorrow. However Eli suspects that the call of the night had reference to himself, and importunately asks for its message. 2. Faithfully disclosed (ver. 18). "Samuel told him every whit." Faithful to God, and respectful to Eli, he unfolds the solemn secret of

the future, in language not softened by omission or nullified by misrepresentation. 3. Reverently acknowledged (ver. 18). "And he said, It is the Lord." LESSONS: 1. Childhood taken to the tabernacle as likely to be called by God. 2. The tabernacle is the place for the instruction of youth. 3. The punishment of parental indulgence is both certain and fearful. 4. The secrets of Divine Providence are ever entrusted to faithful souls. 5. Moral rectitude honoured by God and respected by man (ver. 19-21). (*Joseph S. Ezell, M.A.*) *Samuel, the model of early piety*:—I. In the first place, Samuel's early piety made him—A MODEL OF USEFULNESS. Samuel became a prophet of the Lord, and was very useful in this way. He made known to the people of Israel what God wanted them to do, and taught them how they were to serve and please Him. And then he was a judge, as well as a prophet. He went out at stated times among the people, and settled their disputes and quarrels, and so he was the means of promoting peace and happiness among them. He did a great deal of good to the people of Israel in this way. II. Samuel's early piety made him—A MODEL OF HAPPINESS. Religion is intended to make us happy. Loving and serving God is the secret of true happiness. III. Samuel's early piety made him—A MODEL OF PERSEVERANCE. To persevere means to keep on doing whatever we begin to do without giving up. One reason why some people never succeed in what they begin to do, is that they do not persevere. They soon get tired and give it up. But this was not the way with Samuel. When he began to serve God he persevered in it. He kept on trying without getting tired. IV. Samuel's early piety made him—A MODEL OF HONOUR. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *The still small voice in the night*:—I. THE DIVINE CALL; OR, THE REVELATION BY A HUMAN VOICE. II. Now consider—SAMUEL'S PERCEPTION OF ONLY THE HUMAN VOICE. 1. That when young hearts do not recognise God's voice calling them, or His purpose with them, it is not a proof or a sign that God is not with them, or that they are not under religious influence. 2. Again, when repeated special calls are not intelligently responded to by the young we are not justified in thinking that the Lord is not leading them. 3. But let me say to the young. What may seem to you only a human voice may be God's, is God's, if it asks you to love Him. (*G. B. Riley.*) *Divine calls verified*:—The call of Samuel is very different in its circumstances from the call of St. Paul; yet it resembles it in this particular, that the circumstance of his obedience to it is brought out prominently even in the words put into his mouth by Eli in the text. The characteristic of all Divine calls in Scripture is: (1) to require instant obedience, and (2) to call us we know not to what; to call us on in the darkness. Faith alone can obey them. I. Those who are living religiously have from time to time truths they did not know before, or had no need to consider, BROUGHT BEFORE THEM FORCIBLY; truths which involve duties, which are in fact precepts and claim obedience. In this and similar ways Christ calls us now. He works through our natural faculties and circumstances in life. II. These Divine calls ARE COMMONLY SUDDEN AND AS INDEFINITE AND OBSCURE IN THEIR CONSEQUENCES AS IN FORMER TIMES. The call may come to us: (1) through the death of a friend or relative; (2) through some act of sacrifice, suddenly resolved on and executed, which opens as it were a gate into the second or third heaven—an entrance into a higher state of holiness. (3) The call may come through the hearing or reading of Scripture, or through an unusual gift of Divine grace poured into our hearts. III. NOTHING IS MORE CERTAIN THAN THAT SOME MEN DO FEEL THEMSELVES CALLED TO HIGH DUTIES AND WORKS TO WHICH OTHERS ARE NOT CALLED. No one has any leave to take another's lower standard of holiness for his own. We need not fear spiritual pride if we follow Christ's call as men in earnest. Earnestness has no time to compare itself with the state of other men; earnestness has too vivid a feeling of its own infirmities to be elated at itself. It simply says, "Speak, Lord: for Thy servant heareth." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (*J. H. Newman.*) *The child Samuel's prayer*:—I. First of all we shall take our text AS THE PRAYER OF A LITTLE CHILD. When we see any trace of good in our youth, then, like Eli, we should be the more earnest to have them trained up in the faith. Let the child learn the Catechism, even though he does not understand all that is in it; and as soon as the young heart can comprehend the things of Jesus, labour in power of the Holy Spirit to bring it to a simple dependence upon the great sacrifice. It is said of the Rev. John Angell James, "Like most men who have been eminent and honoured in the Church of Christ, he had a godly mother, who was wont to take her children to her chamber, and with each separately to pray for the salvation of their souls. This exercise, which fulfilled

her own responsibility, was moulding the character of her children, and most, if not all of them, rose up to call her blessed. When did such means ever fail?"

II. Let us now consider the words as **THE CRY OF AN ANXIOUS SOUL**. III. We will turn to the third view of the text as the **PRAYER OF AN EARNEST BELIEVER**. I was led to select this text, by finding it in the letter of one who has just been taken away from our classes, and from our Church. She was about to change her position in life in some degree, and the one prayer that seemed to be ever upon her mind, was a prayer for guidance, and she prayed, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." She said she felt that God was about to do something for her, but she did not know what it was; she little dreamed that she was so near the kingdom and the glory, but yet that was the prayer, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." This is a very appropriate prayer for the Christian when he is in providential difficulty. Take thy matters before the God of Abraham, and the Urim and Thummim shall yet speak to thee. Domine Dirige nos, "Lord direct us," is a good motto, not only for the City of London, but for the citizens of heaven. In points of doctrine this desire humbly uttered may bring us much light. The same course should be adopted by every Christian in matters of practice. As melted wax is fitted to receive the impress of the seal, so let us be ready to accept the Master's teaching. Let His faintest word bind us as with bonds of steel; and let His minutest precept be precious as the gold of Ophir. As for the matters of duty again, be ye ever ready to follow the Master and Him alone. Not Luther, nor Calvin, neither Wesley, nor Whitfield, is to be your Rabbi; Jesus alone is Master in the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it, but where you have not His warrant, let no traditions or ancient customs make you stir so much as a single inch. IV. We will close by observing that our text seems to us rightly to express **THE SPIRIT OF A DEPARTING CHRISTIAN**. He sits patiently upon the river's brink, expecting that his Master shall open the passage for him to pass over dryshod. He is praying, "Speak, Lord," and the sooner Thou wilt speak the more shall I rejoice. Say unto me, "Come up hither." "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Voices of God*:—1. God speaks in the experiences of life. We are but children, and know so little. We can scarcely distinguish the voices which comes to us through the gloom like the murmuring of distant bells, speaking strangely and bewilderingly. There are sad hearts as well as bright ones, and we cannot make out the message of sadness always. I grope my way along the dark corridors, and I plead, "Speak, Lord, speak, for thy servant heareth." And above the tumult I hear a voice which bids me forget the things that are behind and reach forward to those that are before. Onward, and into the future we venture, hoping, believing, knowing that though sorrow may endure for the night, joy cometh in the morning. 2. God speaks to us in the inner life—to the souls of His trusting people. St. John says: "His voice was as the sound of many waters"—helpful, encouraging, loving; the life itself. (*J. S. Stone, D.D.*) *The listening servant*:—These were the words of Samuel. I. **THEY REVEAL THE ATTITUDE OF ATTENTION**. The man who never leaves his counting-room, the student who never lifts his eyes or his attention from his books, will never know the glories of Mendelssohn or Beethoven. The housewife in whose ears is always the clatter of pots and pans will have no time or attention for a sweeter orchestra. So the man or the woman who never listens to God's voice will never hear it. The marginal reference makes a verse in the thirty-seventh Psalm read: "Be silent to the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." It is a soul silent unto God that is in the best attitude for knowing Him, for hearing Him, and for holding fast the blessings which He bestows. This marks as indispensable the quiet hour, the moments of silent communion, until our senses have become so refined and our spiritual ears so attentive that, like Nicholas Herman, of Lorraine, the devout monk, better known as "Brother Lawrence," we too can hear God's voice above the din of the market-place and the buzz of the school-room and the clatter of the kitchen. As someone has well said: "The very familiarity of the voice of God in Nature or His Word may dull our accustomed ears to its sound, just as the roar of Niagara is never heard by those who live upon the banks of the Horseshoe Falls, and the whirl of the loom in the factory falls upon calloused ears. Because we are familiar with God's message in His house, with His written Word, with His songs of praise, we need all the more to stop and listen that we may catch His individual message for our souls." It is said that so great is the hum of business that the people in the streets of London

scarcely ever hear the tolling of the bell in the spire of St. Paul's Cathedral. But they could hear if they would stop a moment in the mad rush of trade, and listen.

II. These words reveal **THE ATTITUDE OF OBEDIENCE**. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." The hearing was in order to heeding. Some people seem to think that contemplative people must, of necessity, be very unpractical and useless people. They point to the almost barren lives lived by many monks and nuns and others, who, as they say, retired from the world to live lives of spiritual meditation and exclusion from evil. But it was in their retirement from the world, in their seclusion from life's active duties, that they made their mistake. They listened to God's voice, but it was not in the attitude of readiness for self-denying, active obedience. Hearing should always be for heeding. The seasons of contemplation should lead to other and longer seasons of service. In Christian contemplation the ideals of the Christian should glow luminous and living. Hearing in order to heeding; contemplation in order to service; this should be the attitude and method of the true Christian. (*G. B. F. Hallock, D.D.*) "*Speak, Lord*":—The child Samuel was favoured above all the family in which he dwelt. The Lord did not speak by night to Eli, or to any of Eli's sons. In all that house, in all the rows of rooms that were round about the Tabernacle where the ark of the Lord was kept, there was no one except Samuel to whom Jehovah spoke. The fact that the Lord should choose a child out of all that household, and that He should speak to him, ought to be very encouraging to you who think yourself to be the least likely to be recognised by God. Notice also that, while God had a very special regard for young Samuel, he had, in that regard, designs concerning the rest of the family. God's elect are chosen, not merely for their own sake; they are chosen for God's name's sake, and they are also chosen for the sake of mankind in general. The Jews were chosen that they might preserve the oracles of God for all the ages, and that they might keep alight the spark of Divine truth that we Gentiles might afterwards see its brightness; and when God's special love is fixed upon one member of a family, I take it that that one ought to say to himself or herself, "Am I not called that I may be a blessing in this family?"

I. And, first, I will speak to you upon **THE SOUL DESIRING**—desiring to be spoken to by God: "*Speak, Lord.*" We cannot endure a dumb God. It is a very dreadful thing to have a dumb friend, a very painful thing to have a wife who never spoke with you, or a father or mother from whom you could never hear a single word of love; and the heart cannot bear to have a dumb God, it wants Him to speak. For what reason does the soul desire God to speak to it? Well, first, it desires thus to be recognised by God. It seems to say, "*Speak, Lord, just to give me a token of recognition, that I may know that I am not overlooked, that I am not flung away like a useless thing upon the world's dust heap, that I am not left to wander like a waif and stray.*"

2. More than that, this desire of the soul is a longing to be called by God. When the Lord said to the child, "*Samuel, Samuel,*" it was a distinct, personal call, like that which came to Mary: "*The Master is come, and calleth for thee,*" or that which came to another Mary when the Lord said to her, "*Mary,*" and she turned herself, and said, "*Rabboni,*" that is to say, "*my dear Master.*" "*Speak, Lord, speak to me; call me.*"

3. "*Speak, Lord, moreover, that I may be instructed.*"

4. We sometimes mean by this expression, "*Speak, Lord, for our guidance.*" We have got into a great difficulty, we really do not know which way the road leads—to the right or to the left—and we may go blundering on, and have to come all the way back again; so we specially need the Lord to speak to us for our guidance.

5. At times, also, we want the Lord's voice for our comfort.

II. Now, secondly, let us think of **THE LORD SPEAKING**. Suppose that the Lord does speak to us; just think for a minute what it is.

1. It is a high honour. The peers of the realm are not so honoured when they see their Queen as you are when you see your God, and he speaks with you. To be permitted to speak with Him is a delight; but to hear Him speak with us is heaven begun below.

2. It is a very solemn responsibility. Jesus Christ spoke to Saul of Tarsus out of heaven, and from that hour Paul felt himself to be the Lord's, a consecrated man, to live and die for Him who had spoken to him.

3. To hear God speak to us will bring us many a happy memory.

4. I think I must also say that it is a probable mercy that God will speak to you.

5. "But how does the Lord speak?" someone asks. God often speaks to His children through His works.

2. God also speaks to His children very loudly by His Providence.

3. But the Lord speaks to us chiefly through His Word.

4. But the Lord has a way of sometimes speaking to the heart by His Spirit—I think not

usually apart from His Word—but yet there are certain feelings and emotions, tenderesses and tremblings, joys and delights, which we cannot quite link with any special portion of Scripture laid home to the heart, but which seem to steal upon us unawares by the direct operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart. Christians are not alike favoured. One may be a child of God, like Eli, and yet so live that God will not speak with him; and, on the other hand, one may be a child like Samuel, obedient, beautiful in character, and watchful to know God's will, praying, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth;" and then God will speak to you. It is not to all that He speaks, but He would speak to all if they were ready to learn what He had to say. III. THE SOUL HEARING. We have had the soul desiring, and the Lord speaking; now for the soul hearing: "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." 1. I think we have here an argument: "Lord, do speak, for I do hear." "There are none so deaf as those that will not hear." 2. Yet it appears to be an inference, as well as an argument, for it seems to run like this, "Lord, if thou speakest, of course thy servant heareth." 3. "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth," seems also to contain a promise within it, namely, that if the Lord will but speak, we will hear. I remember being asked to see a person, and I thought that he wanted to learn something from me; but when I saw him for three-quarters of an hour, he spoke the whole time, and afterwards he told a friend that I was a most delightful person to converse with! When I was told that I said, "Oh, yes, that was because I did not interrupt the man! He was wound up, and I let him run down." But conversation means two people talking, does it not? It cannot be a conversation if I do all the talking, or if my friend does it all; so, in conversing with God, there must be, as we say, turn and turn about. You speak with God, and then sit still, and let God speak with you; and, if He does not at once speak to your heart, open His Book, and read a few verses, and let Him speak to you that way. Some people cannot pray when they wish to do so. I remember George Müller sweetly saying, "When you come to your time for devotion, if you cannot pray, do not try. If you cannot speak with God, do not try. Let God speak with you. Open your Bible, and read a passage." Sometimes, when you meet a friend, you cannot begin a conversation. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The listening soul*:—The story of Samuel begins before he was born, as the story of a river begins up on the mountain side, where the spring bursts forth from its rocky reservoir. The great snowdrifts on the mountain summit, and the deep caverns in the depths of the hills, are interesting chapters in the story of a river. So back of Samuel with his open ear and his open heart toward heaven are a good father and a pious mother; people who were faithful to God and who sought to do their duty. They did not lay up great wealth for Samuel, but they gave him the heritage of a good name, and above all things they gave him the heritage of faith in God, and of love for things good and pure. Let every man who had a praying mother thank God. A home that is fragrant with the reading of the Bible and musical with the sound of family worship is something to be grateful for as long as one lives. Better than gold, better than all the world's luxuries, is the inheritance given by a Christian mother to her children. 1. In the first place, it is a very interesting fact to note what is directly stated here, that up to this time Samuel did not know the Lord. Of course there was a sense in which Samuel did know the Lord. He knew what one can know about God in seeing others worship; but his own heart did not go out to God in prayer and love; and in that deep, inner, personal sense he was without God. Is that not exactly your case? You have heard about Christ since you were a little child, and you feel that you know a great deal about Him, and yet in the truest sense you do not know Him. 2. I want you to notice again that God called Samuel three times before he answered. Has not God called you again and again? You heard the call and you understood it, but you did not answer. Perhaps God came to you at a time of some disgrace because of your sin. Your conscience spoke as it had never spoken before. God called you then with clanging notes of alarm: and your heart said, "I ought to kneel to God; I ought to seek the forgiveness of my sins." You knew it was God's call to you, but you did not answer. Perhaps it was a great joy that came, and the goodness and gentleness of God filled your heart with upspringing praise. With warm heart and tearful eyes you exclaimed, "God is so good to me, I ought to yield Him my heart, I ought to give Him my open thanks, I ought to let the whole world know how good He is to me." It was God's call to you, but you did not answer. 3. I call your attention to the

fact that God called Samuel by name. "Samuel, Samuel," is the way the Lord talks to the boy. God spoke to Abraham in the same way. When the Lord Jesus met Saul on the way to Damascus it was a personal message he brought him, and he cried out to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" God knows us all by name; you are not lost in the crowd to Him. No one can tell how much it will mean if you will only listen to God and answer His call to-night. It is quite possible that if some who hear me now, who are called of God through this word, would yield their hearts in response to God's call, it would be the beginning of a life equally as useful. (L. A. Banks, D.D.) **Speak, Lord.**—*Use of the Divine name in prayer*:—You observe that He did not say, "Lord;" perhaps he hardly dared to take that sacred name upon his lips. He was impressed with such solemn awe at the name of God that he said, "Speak; for Thy servant heareth." I wish that some Christian men of my acquaintance would leave out the Lord's name a little in their prayers, for we may take the name of the Lord in vain even in our supplications. When the heathen are addressing their gods, they are accustomed to repeat their names over and over again. "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!" or, as the Hindoos do when they cry, "Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!" repeating the name of their god; but as for us, when we think of the infinitely-glorious One, we dare not needlessly repeat His name. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Responsive souls*:—In a court of justice a number of violins were lying on the table. The ownership of one of them was in question. It did not differ in appearance from the others, but one witness said he would know it among a thousand. "I would know it," he said, "even if I were blind." "How?" asked the astonished judge. "By its voice," replied the old man. "It would speak to me as no other violin can speak. It is speaking to me now." Aud, listening, he bent low until his ear almost touched the instrument. Then he grasped another that lay beside it, and with his right hand swung the bow across the strings. A low, deep, throbbing, pulsing note broke the stillness of the courtroom. When it ceased, with hand uplifted and with bow pointing to the table where the other instruments still lay, the old player waited expectantly. Across the room, faint, yet clearly audible, came the same sweet, low, throbbing note, yet far richer, sweeter, and purer, as though some celestial master-player had swept the strings. "That," said the old man, "was the voice of the violin. It has a soul, and it has speech. But a false note, rude sounds, or mere discords will not open its lips. So whenever I strike a true note, if the old violin be in the room or near at hand, it will always answer." Thus should it be with the human soul when God, its true proprietor, speaks, answering with a glad and ready response, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." *Heavenly voices*:—Lady Henry Somerset, becoming restless and unsatisfied in early life with worldly honour and gaiety, began to question in good earnest the meaning and end of life. The more she studied the Word, the more she felt that there was a reality in the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that her great need was personal consecration and an active share in the Divine effort to save the world. Still, the light was not given until one day in her garden, alone with Jehovah, questioning the existence of such a thing as Providence, she heard a voice say distinctly, "Act as if I were, and you shall know that I am." The voice was not addressed to the material ear, but the words were distinct to the ear of Lady Henry's soul. They made a deep impression, and the more she thought upon the mysterious matter the more she was convinced that it was really a voice from heaven, sent in answer to her pleadings for light and guidance. She resolved to follow the counsel so strangely sent, and when she put the resolve into action a flood of light dispelled all the darkness, solved every doubt, so that she exclaimed, in a rapture of conviction, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (Christian Herald.) *Guides to religious experiences*:—Although God spoke to Samuel he needed Eli's instruction to enable him to recognise the voice. He heard someone knocking at the door of his heart, but when he looked out all seemed dark until Eli told him in what direction to look for the unseen visitor. We need the direction of those who have become more accustomed to obey such voices, and have thus learned by experience the meaning of such intuitions. (R. C. Ford, M.A.)

Vers. 11—16. **I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.**—*Causes of Eli's overthrow*:—There are several impressive lessons urged by God's treatment of Eli. 1. First of all it

is clear—and it ought to be made most distinct, because of a great practical delusion which exists upon this point—that it is not enough that there be many good points in a character. Character ought not to be a mere question of points at all. Character ought not to be viewed in sections and departments, in aspects and occasional moods. Character should have about it the distinctness of wholeness, entirety. Our goodness is not to be an occasional impulse or a transitory appearance of moral conscience and moral concern for others. Out of our character there is to stream continuous and beneficent influence. When our moral training is perfected we shall not have points of excellence; our whole character will be massive, indivisible, and out of it will go an influence that will constrain men to believe that we have been with God, and that we have imbibed the very spirit of his righteousness. Eli was amiable. A great many mistakes are made about amiability. A man may be amiable simply through mere want of interest or force; he may be so constituted that really he does not much care who is who, or what is what. Eli had religious impulses. What then? There is a sense in which religious impulse may be but constitutional. We must not overlook the constitutional condition. Let us clearly understand, therefore, that mere religious sensibility, religious impulse and religious susceptibility, must not be understood as proclaiming and certifying sound religiousness of character. Eli treated Samuel without official envy or jealousy. So far so good. But absence of envy may come of mere easy good-nature. There are men in the world who do not care one pin-point who is at the head of affairs. That is not magnanimity; that is not nobleness. 2. The second lesson that is urged upon us by this view of Eli's position is—that divine discipline is keen—intensely spiritual. The inquiry is, Can you point out any vulgar sin in Eli? Sin is not measurable by vulgarity. Some men seem incapable of seeing sin until it clothes itself in the most hideous forms. Forms have nothing to do with sin. Herein we see the keenness, the spirituality of Divine discipline. 3. See further, in this case, the terrible of God's displeasure. But the way of the transgressor is hard; he is making a hard pillow for his head. Be he high-priest or doorkeeper; be he mighty in gift or obscure in talent—God will not spare him. If judgment begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The causes of Eli's overthrow*:—Can you find one vulgar sin in the venerable high-priest? We cannot see, looking at the page in the light of merely literary critics, where the great lapse was. We know not but that if Eli, as portrayed in the inspired book, were set up as the standard of determination, a great many would fall short of his lofty altitude. These considerations justify the interest of the question how Eli came to be dispossessed of the priesthood. Look at his noble treatment of the child Samuel. When did he chide the young prophet? When did he superciliously snub the child? Look at the unpriestliness of his tone when he talks to the child. Looking at some aspect of Eli's character, what reverence we feel for the old man! We see that he was a fine interpreter of the supernatural section of life. He was not self-obtrusive; he was no mere priest; he introduced men immediately to God; he did not claim any power of exclusive or tyrannic mediation. Look, again, at the submissiveness of his tone when his doom was pronounced. Then look at the man's interest in the ark of the Lord. Down to the very last, we see that Eli was an intensely religious man, from whom God withdrew His covenant, and on whom He pronounced such severe judgments. We would, therefore, repeat with fervor and with emphasis, that the conscience of universal man asks: "Lord of heaven and earth, is this right?" In looking at the failure of Eli as involving a moral question between the Creator and the creature, we are prepared to teach that the obligations of character must always control the obligations of covenants. All God's covenants are founded upon a moral basis. A covenant is but a form; a covenant is merely an arrangement, if it be not established upon moral conditions. There are circumstances in which God's faithfulness and God's unchangeableness are seen, not in fulfilling, but actually in the annulling, of covenants. God will never maintain the letter at the expense of the spirit. There is a pedantic morality amongst men which says, "The bond must be kept to the letter," and which cares nothing for the spirit of the engagement. God's morality is not a morality of ink and seals and witnesses. It involves life, spirit, motive, purpose. Were God to keep to the letter at the expense of the spirit, He would be no longer God. His unchangeableness is in His righteousness, not in His formality. Our confidence in Him is this:—That He will set aside His oldest servants, His first-chosen men, His most princely vice-

regents and interpreters—he will utterly destroy them from the face of the earth, and hurl after them the written covenants He has made with them—if they trifle with eternal truth, with infinite purity! To cover a corrupt life with the blessing of His approbation, simply because there is a literal covenant to be carried out, would be to deny every element which makes Him God. (J. Parker, D.D.)

Ver. 13. **For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth.**—*The punishment of parental sins:*—Experience is like the stern-light of a ship; it illumines only the path that is already passed over. This familiar adage is true as to our own experience; but if we study carefully the Word of God we can follow, as it were, in the wake of many other voyagers, and get the benefit of the light they cast upon the waves. By a striking concurrence we have two domestic histories unfolded side by side. One is the story of wise parental training, as illustrated in the case of Elkanah and Hannah, the father and mother of Samuel. The other is the tragic story of Eli, the father of those two "scapegraces," Hophni and Phinehas. This latter story is a beacon of warning against parental indulgence of sins committed by those who are entrusted to us as the trustees of their spiritual welfare. The attractions of the bright side only deepen the darkness of the dark side. The clay in Eli's composition was exceedingly frail and friable. Excellent as were his convictions of duty, he seems to have been pitifully weak in working them into practice. There was a lamentable lack of will-power. There are too many such people now-a-days—men and women of good impulses, but of weak performance. They lack spiritual force and fibre; when the strain comes they snap. You cannot build a safe suspension-bridge from New York to Brooklyn if the cables are half iron and half twisted tow. The one vital point in which high priest Eli broke down most disgracefully was in the management of his own household. This has given him his unhappy celebrity. By leaving the iniquities of his graceless sons to grow apace he came at last to be strangled by the serpent-monster which sprang into frightful dimensions within the bosom of his own family. Devotion was prostituted to the foulest indecencies; the road to the altar became a road to hell! Heavily indeed must the tidings of these crimes of the sons have fallen upon the ears of their unhappy father. The extent of their villainies he had not fully known until now. With a broken heart the poor old man summons before him the profligate sons whom he had begotten and whom he had never attempted to govern. It is a harrowing interview. After listening to this solemn and pathetic rebuke from the aged high priest we are ready to wonder how such a man should have been such an unfaithful father. We wonder that one who talked so well should have acted so wrongly. It surprises us that this just abhorrence of what his sons had been doing did not make its appearance in time to restrain them from beginning their abominable practices. At the eleventh hour he rubs open his sleepy eyes to see what he ought to have seen ten hours before. The verdict against the suffering old man was that he did nothing effectual in the way of hindrance to his sons' iniquities; there was no wholesome and powerful restraint. It is not by main force that the wayward son is to be kept back from sin—not by hurling terrific threats in his face or by bombarding him with irritating censure and taunts. Restraint is the application of truth in love. It reasons as well as rebukes. It appeals to conscience, and sets God before the tempted youth. It employs authority, but authority unmingled with passion and resentment. Eli's misgovernment of his children had two cardinal faults. One error was that he rebuked his sons too late. This was the fatal blunder of the father who should begin to dissuade his son from the wine-bottle when the young man had already become an inebriate. Eli's reproofs and admonitions did not commence soon enough. He did not attempt, we may be assured, to "bend the twig;" but he laid vain hold with palsied hands of the deep-rooted and full-grown tree. The other error of the weak-backed Eli was that, having postponed his correction of his dissolute sons until they became hardened in vice, his words of rebuke were as weak as water. As quaint old Matthew Henry remarks, "There was no edge to his reproofs." He was not only too late; he was too lenient. His culpable indulgence had left no respect even for his gray hairs or his tears; they had come to despise the parent who had never secured their respect nor made them feel his authority. Eli's wretched failure was the failure of millions of fathers since his day: when his children were young he would not restrain them, and when they grew older he could not. Before we reach the catastrophe of this most

instructive story let me emphasise a few truths in regard to paternal influence. If Hannah is a model for mothers, Eli is a beacon for fathers. Many things have been spoken or written—yet not one syllable too many—about the happy and holy influence of a godly mother. But there yet remains a solid philosophy in the ancient adage, "Like father, like family." The law of heredity decides the denominational and the political status very generally. "He is a chip of the old block," said some one when he heard the younger Pitt's first speech. "Nay," replied Burke; "he is the old block himself." But if in your houses the "old block" is wormeaten, what shall become of the chips? The grace of God is not transmitted by inheritance, yet a father's conscientious piety is often reproduced in his children. If his footsteps are deeply indented toward God and heaven, he may reasonably hope that his children may tread in them. "He sought to the Lord God of his father and walked in His commandments," is the Bible description of the good King Jehoshaphat. If there is a law of Christian nurture by which, with God's help, the godly family becomes a nursery of religion, so there is a law of unchristian nurture, and by this law bad opinions and bad habits are transmitted to the next generation. Whatever "fires the father kindles, the children gather the wood." Show me one who fences his home around with God's commandments, and lights it up with domestic comforts and pleasures, and anchors himself to his home, and I will show you the best kind of restraint from dangerous evening resorts. A happy Christian home is the surest antidote for evil amusements. But if a father hears the clock strike eleven in the theatre or in his club-house, he need not be surprised if his sons hear it strike twelve in the drinking-saloon or in the gaming-room or the haunts of the profligate. But Eli, you may say, was a servant of God. So he was, in his way, but there are two different types of paternal religion. It is a terrible truth to declare, but I honestly believe that some professed Christians are an absolute hindrance to the conversion of their children. For the warning of such the Divine Spirit has spread out at full length the calamitous history of Eli's awful mistake. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Eli's family government*:—1. In disorderly families it is likely that both parents and children will have to divide the blame. 2. When children grow up into vicious courses, it is wise for parents to try to change the temptations which injured them. 3. When God sends a warning, it will not do just to settle down into a discouraged apathy and consider it resignation. 4. In considering the matter of home government, we must remember that the children have some rights. No one principle is lodged in a boy's mind by nature more deeply than that of a strict and irrevocable justice. 5. Ideas are yet influential in the training of even the stubbornest of children and even the vainest. There is a power in family instruction, and parents are to teach their children what is right and honest and decent and of good report. It is folly to think that young people are without reflection. Perhaps the time will come in which people will cease foolishly to object that the hearts and habits of children ought to be allowed, especially in religious matters, to grow up unbiassed. 6. A proper measure of permissions should be mingled with the restrictions which the family sovereignty imposes. Those who are familiar with the autobiography of Goethe will perhaps recollect with what energy he exclaims, after recounting some painful frettings of parental discipline he himself endured, "If elderly persons wish to play the pedagogue properly, they should neither prohibit nor render disagreeable to a young man anything which gives him an innocent pleasure, of whatever kind it may be, unless at the same time they have something else to put in its place or can contrive a substitute." 7. The time for making impressions upon the minds and the hearts of the children comes much earlier than many parents seem to suppose. 8. When a direct conflict of authority is reached there can be no compromise. The story that Gambetta poked out one of his own eyes when a child, because his father would not permit him to do as he pleased, is perfectly true. What is not so generally known is that the elder Gambetta remained inflexible even after this appalling display of wilfulness. The boy was being educated at the Lycée of Cahors; and conceiving a dislike to the institution, asked to be removed from it. His father refused again and again. At last Léon said, "I will put out one of my eyes if you send me back to the Lycée." It was holiday time. "As you please," said the father, to whom it seems never to have occurred that his boy might have inherited his own strength of purpose. The same day Léon took, not a pen-knife, as the popular tradition has it, but an inkstand, which he dashed with

such violence against his eye as to destroy it. Shocked as was the elder Gambetta, he would not give in; and Léon returned to the Lycée. There could have been no other decision with such a lad. Better the loss of an eye than the victorious defiance of law. 9. Prayer for help every instant is the one necessity for all success in family government. The devil of misrule is one of those evil spirits which cannot be cast out otherwise. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Eli and his sons:—The chief lessons to be drawn from our subject are—1. That to spoil children is not only a weakness on the part of the parents, but a positive sin, which may bring great mischief and sorrow not to the children only, but to the parents themselves; and further, that children will be spoiled, if parents, to save trouble or spare their own feelings, only remonstrate without actually punishing them. 2. That God does not leave a man unpunished for his sins and weaknesses, because he is in the main a good man and a true servant of God. 3. That people may be naturally amiable; and yet that their very amiabilities may be a snare to them, and plunge them into all sorts of spiritual mischief. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

The punishment of evil doing:—1. It is plain in the first place, that God requires holiness in all who serve him. Why were Hophni and Phinehas dismissed with Divine reproaches? Because they were wanting in original thought? We now dismiss our ministers because they are not very original. We do not learn that Hophni and Phinehas were dismissed from the priest's office because they were wanting in vitality and freshness of brain power. Why were they dismissed? Because they were behind the age? The age! Oh, what a ghost that age is to some people. We do not read that Hophni and Phinehas were dismissed because they were behind the age—but because they were corrupt men. Corruptness cannot be atoned for by genius. Gifts are no substitute for grace. Holiness, then, is the fundamental requirement in all persons who would interpret God and serve Him in any department of the great mystery of His kingdom. Holiness is genius. Holiness hath keen, piercing eyes that see every filament of Divine truth and holy communication to men. 2. It is evident that all the covenants of God are founded upon a moral basis. "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, shall walk before me for ever." There is the bond, there is the covenant of God repeated by a servant. Hath he promised thee, O man, and art thou living upon that promise? Know thou, that the promise is always secondary; the character is primary—righteousness first. Go to the first line—the great line on which all true things are built, all lasting empires and monarchies are founded—and you will find that along the line of righteousness God never moves to the right hand or to the left—on from eternity to eternity, never a break or a deflection in the line of infinite righteousness. 3. It is evident that some of the communications of God are at first very startling and terrible. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

The guilt and consequence of parental unfaithfulness:—Could we trace the public and private evils, which infect our otherwise happy country, to their true source, I doubt not we should find that most of them proceed from a general neglect of the moral and religious education of children. I. We are to consider **THE SIN HERE MENTIONED**. Eli's sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. It is not said that he set them a bad example. It is evident, on the contrary, that his example was good. Nor is he accused of neglecting to admonish them. In this respect he was much less culpable than many parents at the present day. But though Eli admonished he did not restrain his children. Of the same sin those parents are now guilty, who suffer their children to indulge, without restraint, those sinful propensities to which childhood and youth are but too subject; and which, when indulged, render them vile in the sight of God. Among the practices which thus render children vile are a quarrelsome, malicious disposition, disregard to truth, excessive indulgence of their appetites, neglect of the Bible and religious institutions, profanation of the Sabbath, profane, scurrilous, or indecent language, wilful disobedience, associating with openly vicious company, taking the property of their neighbours, and idleness which naturally leads to everything bad. From all these practices it is in the power of parents to restrain their children in a very considerable degree. Nor will a few occasional reproofs and admonitions, given to children, free parents from the guilt of partaking in their sins. No, they must be restrained; restrained with a mild and prudent, but firm and steady hand: restrained early, while they may be formed to habits of submission, obedience, and diligence; and the reins of government must never for a moment be slackened, much less given up into

their hands, as is too often the case. If we neglect our duty to our heavenly Father, we surely cannot wonder or complain, if He suffers our children to neglect their duty to us. II. THE PUNISHMENTS DENOUNCED AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE GUILTY OF IT. It will soon appear, that these punishments, like most of those with which God threatens mankind, are the natural consequences of the sin against which they are denounced. 1. That most of his posterity should die early, and that none of them should live to see old age. Now it is too evident to require proof, that the sin of which Eli was guilty, naturally tends to produce the consequence which is here threatened as a punishment. When youth are permitted to make themselves vile, without restraint, they almost inevitably fall into courses which tend to undermine their constitutions, and shorten their days. 2. In the second place, God declares to Eli, that such of his children as were spared should prove a grief and vexation, rather than a comfort to him. The man of thine, whom I shall not cut off, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart. How terribly this threatening was fulfilled in the case of Eli, you need not be told. If parents indulge their children in infancy and childhood, and do not restrain them when they make themselves vile, it is almost impossible that they should not pursue courses and contract habits, which will render them as bitterness to their fathers, and a sorrow of heart to those that bore them. If such parents are pious, their hearts will probably be grieved, and their eyes consumed with tears, to see their children rebelling against God, and plunging into eternal ruin. They that sow the seeds of vice in the minds of their children, or who suffer them to be sown by others, and to grow without restraint, will almost invariably be compelled to reap, and to eat with many tears the bitter harvest which those seeds tend to produce. 3. In the third place, God forewarns Eli, that his posterity should be poor and contemptible. Here again we see the natural consequences of Eli's sin in its punishment. Children, who are not well instructed and restrained by their parents, will almost inevitably in such a place as this, contract habits of idleness, instability, and extravagance, which naturally lead to poverty and contempt. 4. Lastly; God declares that none of the methods thus appointed to obtain the pardon of sin, should avail to procure pardon for the iniquity of his house; I have sworn unto Eli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be purged away by sacrifice nor offering for ever. This too was the natural consequence of his conduct. He had suffered them to follow without restraint those courses which rendered them unfit for heaven, until their day of grace was past, and the door of mercy for ever closed against them. They were now given up to a hard heart and reprobate mind. The terrible punishments denounced against this sin sufficiently show that it is exceedingly displeasing in the sight of God. Let us then inquire as was proposed. III. WHY IT IS SO? 1. Because it proceeds from very wicked and hateful principles. There is scarcely any sin which proceeds from worse principles and more hateful dispositions than this. For instance, sometimes it proceeds from the love and the practice of vice. Openly vicious and profligate parents, who do not restrain themselves, cannot, of course, but be ashamed to restrain their children. In other instances, this sin is occasioned by secret impiety and infidelity. Even if such parents sometimes restrain the grosser vices of their children, they will give them no religious instruction; they will never pray for them, for they never pray for themselves; and without religious instruction and prayer, little or nothing effectual can be done. But in religious parents, this sin almost invariably proceeds from indolence and selfishness. They love their own ease too well to employ that constant care and exertion, which are necessary to restrain their children, and educate them as they ought. They cannot bear to correct them, or put them to pain. There is also much unbelief, much contempt of God, and much positive disobedience in this sin. Parents are as expressly and as frequently commanded to restrain, to correct, and instruct their children, as to perform any other duty whatever. Now these are some of the worst principles of our depraved nature; and therefore we need not wonder that a sin, which proceeds from such sources, is exceedingly displeasing to God. 2. This sin is exceedingly displeasing to God, because, so far as it prevails, it entirely frustrates His design in establishing the family state. 3. God is greatly displeased with this sin on account of the good which it prevents, and the infinite evil which it produces. He has taught us, that children properly educated will be good and happy, both here and hereafter. 4. Lastly;

this sin is exceedingly displeasing to Him, because those who are guilty of it, break over the most powerful restraints, and act a most unnatural part. He knew that it would not be safe to entrust such creatures as we are with the education of immortal souls, unless we had powerful inducements to be faithful to the trust. He, therefore, implanted in the hearts of parents a strong and tender affection for their offspring, and a most ardent desire for their happiness, that they might thus be induced to educate them as they ought. But those who neglect to restrain their children, do violence to this powerful operative principle. And now let us improve the subject, 1. By inquiring whether the sin does not greatly prevail among ourselves. 2. If there are any children or youth now present, whose parents do not restrain them, and who make themselves vile, by indulging in vicious or sinful practices, they may learn from this subject, what will be their fate, unless repentance prevent. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The children of religious parents*:—1. The life and history of Eli is full of instruction, of painful warning and sad reflection. The prominent feature of his history is the ill-success of his children. Eli failed in his children, but more than this, he culpably failed. It was no matter of commiseration; it was one of blame and severe censure. 2. The leading circumstance which I will dwell upon in Eli's life is his conduct to his children and his treatment of them. It is a circumstance which must have struck many that the sons of eminently good persons often turn out ill; or that in many cases, they fall far short of the character and reputation of their parents. (1.) One leading reason by which we may account for the frequent follies of the children of the good may lie in the initiative and assimilative powers of childhood, and the circumstance that these two powers are generally developed to the suppression of the other powers of the mind and imagination. If a person with any peculiarity of manner enters a schoolroom he will find from each remote corner children of three years old at once marking the peculiarity and taking it off exactly. Now this same imitative faculty, this powerful exercise of the assimilative principle accounts to a great degree for the matter before us. The forms of a religious life in the parents live before the child, and the child skilfully sketches from the well-known original. But religion will not endure so superficial a handling. The seeds in such cases as the above lie scattered on the beaten highway of life; they do not sink in, or if they do, they simply fall into the dry and arid rut of the roadside, which produces a thin, vapid, and fruitless result. In the hour of temptation or trial, Satan takes away the seed which has no natural hold on the soil, or leaves it withering by the roadside of life. The remedy for this difficulty is almost self-suggested. It is incumbent on every religious parent to lead his child to do his own work, to examine self frequently, and to search into the reality of his motives. Considering the great temptation there must ever be to such an one to be satisfied with his copy, he should as a rule be checked rather than encouraged, since encouragement lies ever ready to hand. The religious parent should trust far more to the ascertaining his child's character, disposition, and leaning, than to producing rapid and brilliant results through the associative principle, and should constantly throw back his child on the use of stated means, than on the refreshing yet too evanescent influences of associative feeling. He should avoid making the structure of religion in his child rest on the hereditary and traditional principle, thereby letting him imagine that religion can be an heirloom, rather than the self-wrought, self-gained result of original energy. Religion is no matter of a past aristocracy, but a present energy. (2.) Another cause of this disappointment will lie in the official position of the parent. Eli was a priest. His position and daily work set him apart as God's servant in a peculiar manner. A certain consistency in all which pertained to him was expected by the world. What men expect others to be, or estimate them as, they will either become or pretend or imagine they are. The opinion and expectation of others have a strange influence over us. The expectations of others, as our parents and relations, that we shall assume a certain form of character, while we retain our relationship and connection with them, will often make us imagine that we are acting rightly because we pursue the suggested courses, and make us feel consistent, because we assume a certain external uniformity. This is hollow. In such cases the youth has been so accustomed to dwell amid the external influences of religion, that he is as one who has been all his life gazing on a picture-gallery, and is satisfied because he has scanned the features of the

portrait that is identified with the individual character which it represents. Nothing is more fatal. (3.) Another reason for this inconsistency will exist in the close connection which religion ever has with the natural feelings. It recognises and consecrates the yearning affections, the inclinations to respect those in immediate authority over us, the sensation of gratitude, and the strong consolation which there is in constant dependence; all of these are evoked hourly in the domestic circle, and religion making them her subject matter they are often too rapidly mistaken for religion itself, and for a time carry away its credit and good report. But they will not stand the test of time and adversity. There will be found no duty more incumbent upon the parent than that of teaching the child to discern between association and principle, and to value at a high price individual exertion and independent energy. (4.) But further, another reason by which we may account for this inconsistency in children of religious parents is, that religion is very often not made in homes sufficiently individual. The religion of caste, the religion of family prestige, the religion of ancestral predilection, is not the religion which will stand before the assaults we may be prepared to meet. The only principle that will stand the test of the last day is that which is based on deep inward convictions and experience in the individual attachment to God's will. Parents cannot too much throw their children in these respects on to their own resources. (5.) Then, too, much will lie at the door of the natural indulgence of the parent in matters to do with the soul and God. The parent should avoid being the moral judge of the child; he should bring him to the test of some great objective law, which will know of no partialities or differences of administrations. He should urge his child to have reference to those who are accustomed to stand free of earthly relationships in their estimate of moral acts. We are all of us born with a nature that is better managed by laws purely external and objective to itself. The subjectivity of personal influences, reflexes as they too often are of self, are in many cases replete with hazard for those who fall under them. (6.) Another reason that may sometimes account for this result with children of religious parents, is, that they not unfrequently are allowed to imagine that they may taste of the fruit of the perfected religious character before they have spent a single laborious effort towards its production. 3. But, singularly enough, another fault seems to have mixed itself up in the character of Eli—a yearning for and a love of family aggrandisement. There seems to have been a winking, if not more, at the mode in which his sons made a traffic of their religious position. Religion, especially family religion, has always a market value in the world. The recognition of this, and the practical use of it for a man's own ends will rank among a man's most perilous faults. It is a fearful thing to deal with our position with regard to God as a medium of exchange and barter. (*E. Monro.*) Eli:—In Eli we have one in whom great and varied excellence is fatally marred by a single fault. And yet, even that fault was at least amiable, akin to a form of goodness, and capable of a specious apology and extenuation. It was but an excess and misdirection of parental love. "Eli," we are told, "was very old;" and in that decay of firmness and energy which attends the decline of life, are to be found the solution and apology of this miserable weakness. Yet this did not avail with God. And why? Eli had not grown weakly indulgent first when the powers of nature were failing; nor had Eli's sons jumped by a sudden spring from a life of virtue to such depths of profligacy and vileness. Eli had all along been educating his sons to be what they had become. He had taught and counselled and reproved them well; but he had been too fond of them to restrain and punish them. And now they were vile, and set at defiance an authority they had never been taught to honour; and he must bear the bitter penalty. 1. Let me remind you that a parent is a ruler by appointment of God, and is held at God's bar accountable for the office and work of a ruler. A parent then is more than an example and an instructor. He is one of those "powers that be, that are ordained of God," and, in his sphere, is appointed to be a terror to evil-doers, and for a praise to them that do well. The family is a Divine polity of which he is the head; and as such, in it he is the representative of God, with a portion of whose power he is correspondently clothed. And what is a polity without laws? and what are laws without penalties? and what are penalties without punishments? Too many are wont in this day to regard the whole subject of punishment, whether in the family or the state, under the misleading influence of a weak sensibility and a counterfeit benevolence.

But He, whose love is far purer and truer than any known to man, has appointed it to man as a needful restraint and a salutary remedy; and we shall never find our wisdom or our welfare in any vain attempt to criticise or amend the ordinance of God. 2. Lastly, let me remind you that a child is a being that needs restraint and coercion. False theories of education are mainly built on the basis of a false estimate of the moral condition of human nature. Starting with the false position that the child has nothing in it but elements of good, which only need to be developed in order to the production of a pure and lovely character, and protected during their growth from corrupting influences from without, it overlooks the solemn truth, that, mingled with these elements, are prolific seeds of evil, which need to be eradicated with a firm and steady hand, and resolutely repressed upon their first shooting forth and growth. The true work of moral training is, like all other true works of men, a warfare also, undertaken and prosecuted against contrary influences and opposite tendencies, which nature does not aid, but opposes. Parents have the world, the flesh, and the devil to hinder their success. True, it is not in man's power to change the heart. That is the prerogative of God only. But he that works by Divine rules, with faith in Divine promises and Divine methods, will not be apt to lack a Divine blessing. (*R. A. Hallam, D.D.*) *Eli: A warning to parents*:—We are sometimes tempted to imagine, that God will in mercy overlook the defects in a devoted servant on account of his distinguished position. The case of Eli is adapted to correct such a mistaken notion. Over domestic, as well as out of door sins, the judgment of God is seen to hang alike. I. Let us consider ELI'S SIN. We can be too kind and indulgent to our children is the simple, yet important lesson taught by the history of Eli. There are, then, two things equally to be avoided in the training of children—overkindness and overseverity. Eli's sin was overkindness. Now, this paternal overkindness in Eli was a sin for which he was held responsible. It is a sin, too, which, on account of the tender susceptibility of the parental instinct, requires the nicest degree of watchfulness over the treacherous emotions of our deceitful heart. There are many parents who are scrupulous to maintain a character for moral decorum, and spare no pains to instruct their children how to walk in the paths of worldly wisdom, but they have not that anxiety for their eternal welfare which the Word of God requires. They seem to imagine, that, if they take their children regularly to church every Sunday, they have fulfilled their parental duty in a religious point of view. II. Such was Eli's sin: Let us now consider THE MANNER IN WHICH HE IS REPROVED FOR IT BY THE MOST HIGH. He who had judged Israel for nearly forty years, was now condemned at the bar of conscience by a stern reproof from the lips of a stripling. It is not usual for venerable old age to be obliged to sit to hear the voice of inexperienced youth raised in reprimanding accents. Nothing could have been more humiliating to Eli's sense of righteousness than to have had the sin of neglecting to discharge his duty towards his children brought to his remembrance by a child. If it were wisely ordained that a child endued with such a disposition as that of Samuel should be sent to rebuke an elder, the reception given by Eli to Samuel is worthy the imitation of old age. It is worthy of remark that the same humble instrument has been employed by God on other occasions. The voice, manner, and conduct of a good child oftentimes exercise a mysterious power in not only checking the faults of old age, but in bridling the restless pride in the bosom of manhood at its prime. In the gradual training of the mind to the attainment of the perfection of its original knowledge and happiness, it forfeited through the first act of disobedience to the commands of God, our most valuable instruction in gaining our lost inheritance is not to be derived in the heated crowds of a busy and ever-vying world, but from the simple ways and unadorned sentiments of childhood. The silvery voice of childhood has ere this touched a chord in man's complicated system that has aroused his supine nature from its prevailing tendency to apathy, and set in motion the million wheels of duty. III. Let us consider SOME OF THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES ATTENDING ELI'S SIN. Having been too fondly indulged in the days of youth, they gradually lost that filial respect for parental authority which is of the last importance to the welfare of children. The sequel of the unfortunate career of Hophni and Phinehas is soon told. In consequence of the transgressions of the Israelites, they were given up by God to the vengeance of their enemies. Finally, let those parents, whose besetting sin, like that of Eli, tempts them to make a practice of spoiling

their children, of excusing their faults, and allowing them to have too much of their own way, remember that they are certainly exposing themselves to the wrath of God. If indulged children do not turn out immoral, they are likely to turn out proud, selfish, ungrateful, disrespectful, cold, distant, inattentive, disobliging, selfwilled, headstrong, grasping, extravagant, unnatural. Be sure such a sin will find the incautious parent out. God says so, and who shall contradict it? (*R. Jones, B.A.*) *The fatal consequences of a bad education*:—

I. Observe THE CRIMES OF THE SONS OF ELI. II. THE INDULGENCE OF THE PARENT. III. Observe WHAT TERRIBLE PUNISHMENTS THIS CRIMINAL INDULGENCE DREW DOWN UPON THE GUILTY FATHER, THE PROFLIGATE SONS, AND EVEN THE WHOLE PEOPLE UNDER THEIR DIRECTION. These threatenings were accomplished in all their rigour. 1. To neglect the education of our children is to be ungrateful to God, whose wonderful power created and preserved them. 2. To neglect the education of our children is to refuse to retrench that depravity, which we communicated to them. 3. To neglect the education of our children is to be wanting in that tenderness, which is so much their due. What inheritance can we transmit to them? Titles? They are often nothing but empty sounds without meaning and reality. Riches? (*Prov. xxiii. 5.*) Honours? They are often mixed with disagreeable circumstances, which poison all the pleasure. It is a religious education, piety, and the fear of God, that makes the fairest inheritance, the nobles succession, that we can leave our families. To neglect the education of our children is to let loose madmen against the state, instead of furnishing it with good rulers or good subjects. The least indulgence of the bad inclinations of children sometimes produces the most fatal effects in society. This is exemplified in the life of David, whose memory may truly be reproached on this article, for he was one of the most weak of all parents. Observe his indulgence of Amnon. It produced incest. Remark his indulgence of Absalom. This produced a civil war. Remark how he indulged Adonijah, who made himself chariots, and set up a retinue of sixty men (*1 Kings i. 6.*). This produced an usurpation of the throne and the crown. To neglect the education of your children is to furnish them with arms against yourselves. To neglect the education of children is to prepare torments for a future state, the bare apprehension of which must give extreme pain to every heart capable of feeling. A reformation of the false ideas, which you form on the education of children, is, so to speak, the first step, which you ought to take in the road set before you this day. First maxim: Delays, always dangerous in cases of practical religion, are peculiarly fatal in the case of education. As soon as children see the light, and begin to think and reason, we should endeavour to form them to piety. Second maxim: Although the end of the divers methods of educating children ought to be the same, yet it should be varied according to their different characters. Let us study our children with as much application as we have studied ourselves. Third maxim: A procedure, wise in itself, and proper to inspire children with virtue, may sometimes be rendered useless by symptoms of passions, with which it is accompanied. We cannot educate them well without a prudent mixture of severity and gentleness. Fourth maxim: The best means of procuring a good education lose all their force, unless they be supported by the examples of such as employ them. Example is always a great motive, and it is especially such to youth. Children know how to imitate before they can speak, before they can reason. Fifth maxim: A liberty, innocent when it is taken before men, becomes criminal when it is taken before tender minds, not yet formed. What circumspection, what niceties does this maxim engage us to observe. Sixth maxim: The indefatigable pains, which we ought always to take in educating our children, ought to be redoubled on these decisive events, which influence both the present life, and the future state. For example, the kind of life, to which we devote them, is one of these decisive events. Companions, too, are to be considered as deciding on the future condition of a child. Above all, marriage is one of these decisive steps in life. A good father of a family, unites his children to others by the two bonds of virtue and religion. Seventh maxim: The best means for the education of children must be accompanied with fervent prayer. (*J. Saurin.*) *Eli and his sons*:—I. ELI, LET US OBSERVE, WAS OTHERWISE AND PERSONALLY A GOOD MAN. His character underwent searching tests at the most critical period of his life, and it is clear that he was resigned, humble, and in a true sense devout. If Eli had been the successor of a long line of rulers of the religion of Israel, submission would have been easier. "You can fall with dignity," it

has been said, "when you have behind you a great history." It was easier for Louis XVI. to mount the scaffold, than for Napoleon to embark for St. Helena. Eli had succeeded to a position to which his family could never have expected to succeed in the ordinary course of things. He hoped, no doubt, that his sons would secure to his family the dignity of the priesthood for all coming time; he hoped he was to be the first of a long line of priests of the house of Ithamar. The disappointment of a hope like this is much more than any but a good man can experience without repining. His fault, after all, was not positive but negative; he had only done less than he ought to have done; he had sinned out of good nature, out of an easy temper, but could he have been chastised more severely had he himself sinned viciously and out of *malice prepense*? This is what many a man would have said in Eli's position; but Eli is too certain that he is in the hands of One who is all just, as well as all powerful, to attempt or to think of complaint or remonstrance. And Eli's personal goodness is also seen in his humility; he submits to be rebuked and sentenced by his inferior without a word of remonstrance. The nameless member of a prophetic order tells a man who is at the head of the religious as well as the civil state of Israel, that his conduct has been marked by ingratitude to God, and that the doom of degradation awaits his house. We know how rulers like Ahab and Manasseh treated prophets, however eminent, who told them unwelcome truths. Eli listens, he is silent; no violent word, much less any act of violence, escapes him. He has no petty sense of offended dignity that must vent its spleen on the messenger, when his conscience tells him that the message is only what he might expect to hear. This, I say, is true humility, the desire, the determination to see ourselves as we really are, to bear ourselves towards God and towards our fellow men accordingly. And, thirdly, Eli's personal piety is especially noticeable at the moment of his death. He had to hear that the ark of God was taken. It was too much. It came to pass that when the messenger "made mention of the ark of God, Eli fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died." This, I say, was an unpremeditated revelation of character. He might have survived the national disgrace; he might have survived the death of his children; but that the ark of the sacred presence, of which he was the appointed guardian, should be taken, this he could not survive. It touched the Divine honour, and Eli's devotion is to be measured by the fact, that the shock of such a disaster killed him on the spot. II. There is, then, no question as to Eli's personal excellence, but it was ACCOMPANIED BY A WANT OF MORAL RESOLUTION AND ENTERPRISE WHICH EXPLAINS THE RUIN OF HIS HOUSE. He and it were ruined "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." The original word might perhaps be better rendered, "They brought curses on themselves." They are described as sons of Belial, or in modern language as thoroughly bad men. Eli only talked to his sons, and we can understand how he may have persuaded himself that talking was enough; that instead of taking a very painful resolution it was better to leave matters alone. If he were to do more, was there not a risk that he might forfeit the little influence over the young men that still remained to him? Would not harsh treatment defeat its object by making them desperate? Might they not attribute the most judicial severity to mere personal annoyance? If, after speaking to them, he left them alone they would think over his words. Anyhow, they would soon be older, and as they grew older they would, he may have hoped, grow more sensible; they would see the imprudence, the impropriety, as well as the graver aspects of their conduct; they would anticipate the need of action on their father's part by such a reformation of their manners as would hush the murmurs and allay the discontent of Israel. And even if this could not be calculated on very seriously, something might occur to give a new turn to their occupations. In any case, it might be better to wait and see whether matters would not in some way right themselves. This is what weak people do. They escape, as they think, from the call of unwelcome duty, from the duty of unwelcome action, by stretching out the eyes of their mind towards some very vague future, charged with all sorts of airy improbabilities. If Eli had not been blinded by his misplaced affection for his children, he would have known that outward circumstances do not improve those whose wills are already on a wrong moral tack, and that there is no truth whatever in the assumption that because we are getting older, we are therefore, somehow, necessarily getting better. Years may only bring with them a harder heart, and a more blunted conscience.

Nothing but an inward change, a change of will, and character, and purpose, could possibly have saved Hophni and Phinehas, and this change was, to say the least, more probable if they could have ceased to hold the offices which meant for them only every day they held them deepening guilt and ever accumulating profanation. Downright wickedness rouses opposition; something, others feel, must be done, if anything can be done, to put it down; but weakness saunters through the world arm in arm with some form of goodness, and men put up with its failures out of consideration to the good company that it keeps. Had it not been for the excellence of Eli's personal character, Israel would have risen in indignation to chase the young profaners of the sacred priesthood from the precincts of the sanctuary; but Eli's sons could not be treated as common criminals, and Eli failed to do for his God, for his religion, for his country, that which he only could do, if the law of God's just judgments was not to take effect. Eli's sin consisted precisely in this: he did not restrain his sons. III. Let us make two OBSERVATIONS IN CONCLUSION. 1. It is said that a refined civilisation brings with it increased softness of manners and a corresponding weakening of human character, and this, it is urged, is to be seen in public as well as in private life; but it is especially observable in the modern relations that exist between parents and children. Fifty years ago the English father was king in his household. He was approached with a kind of distant respect; he was loved, but he was feared as much as he was loved; his will was law, and he did not scruple to enforce it. Now, many a family is virtually a little republic, which assigns to the parents a sort of decorative leadership, but in which the young people, in virtue sometimes of their numbers, sometimes of their boisterous spirits, really rule. Those who know most of the change can tell us whether it works well, and especially whether fathers who have failed to assert their true authority are rewarded by the priceless gift of dutiful and high-minded sons. It may be that two generations back the relations between parents and children erred on the side of stiffness and severity. Is it certain that we in our day do not err on the side of good-natured indifference to plain moral obligations? No relationship can be more charged with responsibility than that between a parent and the immortal being to whom he has been the means of giving life. It may be that two generations ago the relations between fathers and sons were wanting in geniality, that they were stiff, that they were formal; but let us ask ourselves this question: Is it better, when a father has gone to his account, that his son should say of him: "My father kept me in strict order, but he never knowingly let me do any wrong that he could prevent," or that he should say, as sons have said: "My father was the most kindly and easy-going of men; but he never helped me to keep out of troubles which, alas! will not be buried in my grave?" 2. And, lastly, let us note that no outward circumstances can of themselves protect us against the insidious assaults of evil or against the enfeeblement of mind. If Hophni and Phinehas could have led honest and pure lives anywhere, it surely would have been on the steps of the sanctuary at Shiloh; if anywhere Eli could have felt that family affections may be so displaced as to dishonour God, and that weakness in a ruler may be criminal, he would have felt it at a spot which was so charged with the memories of the heroes and saints of Israel; but, in truth, external advantages of this kind only help us when the will and the conscience are in a condition to be helped. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Ver. 15. **The doors of the House of the Lord.**—*The doors of the Tabernacle*:—Some think, that whereas yet the Tabernacle consisted of curtains and coverings, and so had veils instead of doors: that the House of God and the Tabernacle were not the same, as the Ark was in one place and the Tabernacle in another in the time of David and Solomon, before the temple was built; and hereunto this giveth some probability, because it is called here not the Tabernacle but the Temple of the Lord (ver. 3), and the House of the Lord (ver. 15). But this is not like: for the Tabernacle was set up in Shiloh in Joshua's time (chap. 18. 1), and so it had continued in the time of the Judges (Jud. 21. 19), and there it was now in Eli's time (chap. 1. 9.). 2. Therefore it is more like, that though the Tabernacle, while it was in the desert, for the better transporting and carrying from place to place, had veils only hanging in the entrance instead of doors; yet now, being settled in a certain place, it might also be made sure with doors. 3. These were the doors only of the outward court, whither the people

might come in to worship, and the charge whereof belonged to the Levites (1. Chron. 26.). (*A. Willett.*) *Humble service*:—I heard the Rev. F. B. Meyer say that he would consider it as great an act of consecration for a young woman to stay at home and play her brother's accompaniment in learning a song if thereby she could keep him at home that evening, although the doing so prevented her attending some religious meeting. I like what is told us of the young Samuel on the most eventful night in his life's history when God spoke to him and revealed Himself to the lad; what do we read at the close? "And Samuel lay until the morning and opened the doors of the house of the Lord." There he is, after such a night, opening the doors, sweeping the floor as usual. The Beatific Vision must not keep us from our common duties; we must pass from the seeing to the serving. (*Christian Endeavour Times.*)

Ver. 17. What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?—

A private enquiry:—I. LET US VIEW THE QUESTION AS ADDRESSED TO SAMUEL. 1. The first remark which we shall make upon it is that God does speak to men. In ways suitable to their feeble nature the Lord has spoken to men. (1.) He has done so in the inspired volume of His sacred Word. Every line in this priceless volume was dictated by the Spirit, and is a message from God to men. (2.) God, in a renewed manner, speaks to us by His Word when His Spirit applies it to us individually. (3.) Moreover, our God has ways of communicating His mind to His children by those of His servants who speak in His name. He directs the thoughts of His ministers, and suggests their words, so that they speak to the cases of those who are led to hear the Word of God. (4.) By our own thoughts, also, the Lord communes with us. (5.) Our God speaks to us also in Providence. 2. God regards not age in His speaking, but He condescends to speak with young children. 3. When we do hear the voice of God we should be deeply impressed by it. 4. We should store up in our memories whatever God says to us. 5. Looking at the text in its light toward Samuel, we learn that we should be able to tell what we hear from God. (1.) Samuel did this very solemnly, with a deep sense of its weight. (2.) Samuel did his work very carefully and completely. We read, "and Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." He said nothing more and nothing less than God had spoken. You know how difficult it is to repeat a story correctly. Additions and subtractions are weeds which it is hard to keep out of the garden of conversation. Alas! this holds good even of the Word of the Lord: how many add to it or take from it! (3.) It was a very painful duty, which the holy child was called upon to perform. (4.) But then, in Samuel's case, it was an obvious duty. (5.) And to communicate the message of God was a very weighty duty to the child Samuel. II. LET US NOW VIEW THE QUESTION AS IT COMES FROM ELI. 1. I understand from Eli's question, first, that we should willingly learn, even from a child. 2. Next, learn from Eli, that we should be willing to know the very worst of the case. 3. Next, we should desire to hear the whole of God's word. Men aspire to be clever, and to that end they must appear to be bold thinkers, highly cultured, and far removed from the old worn-out notions of orthodoxy. Many are the floral displays in sermons! Sheaves of corn are too plain and rustic. This is the age of bouquets and wreaths of rare flowers. Paul must give way to Browning, and David to Tennyson. Brethren, there are enough in the novelty business without us; and we have something better to do. Keep us right by saying to us, "What is the thing the Lord hath said to thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me!" III. And now consider the question, TO AND FROM OURSELVES. I want to put a series of questions. 1. Have we ever asked the Lord to speak to us? 2. Next, have we all regarded what God has spoken? 3. A further question is this: Have we shaped our lives by what God has said? 4. Next, have we told what we know? 5. Do our children ever rebuke us? This Samuel was to Eli like a grandchild. His sons were grown up, and had left him; but here was this little one brought into the temple to minister there, and the old man came to be rebuked by this little child. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 18. And Samuel told him every whit.—*Speaking the truth in love*:—Samuel, so adjured, "told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." How interesting it is to trace, at every stage of the history, the development of this holy child's character. He had been called to be a prophet, that is, an announcer

of God's word and will to His people. And what are the leading qualifications for the office of a prophet? 1. That he should speak the whole truth fully and without reserve. 2. He must speak the truth in love. He is not to speak harshly or bitterly, as if glorying in the prospect of sentence being executed, but tenderly, and in sympathy. What a good augury of his right discharge of the prophetic office—this fidelity combined with this sympathy! (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Samuel's youthful virtues:—1. His submission to Eli deserves particular notice. Early grace made him anxious to do well, and to obey those over him in the Lord. 2. Samuel showed great respect to Eli's feelings. He had a regard for the feelings of the amiable old man, and had no desire to glory over him by being preferred as the channel of Divine communication, or to embitter his gray hairs by such mournful tidings. His conduct evinced great self-command and consideration for others—features of character of great worth and usefulness, and very beautiful in one so young. It is wrong even to tamper with the feelings of any one, or to distress a heart unreasonably. There is a cruelty in annoying the aged by wantonly abusing them for the faults of other years, or reproaching them for the vices of their sons, or bearing to them the tales which irritate their souls, and make their lives unhappy. He was not forward to utter bad news, as young persons often are, but acted with becoming caution. 3. Samuel's candour was remarkable. Samuel's frank and candid statement is a model to every youth. (*R. Steel.*) **It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good.**—I. A

JUDICIOUS DISCOVERY FROM WHENCE ALL EVILS COME. "It is the Lord." He is omnipotent, and who hath withstood His power. He is just, and will bring no evil without good cause. He is wise, and whatsoever evil He bringeth He can draw it to a good end. . . . He remaineth the same God in the fire and in the earthquake which He was in the still voice; the same when He slew the Israelites as when His light shone upon their tabernacle. His glorious attributes cross not one another. His justice taketh not from His mercy, nor His mercy from the equity of His justice; but He is just when He bindeth up, and merciful when He woundeth us. . . . The same God that overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea, that "slew great and mighty kings" (Ps. cxxxvi. 15, 17, 18) did deliver up His own people, did deliver up the ark to Dagon: for His justice, His wisdom, and His mercy "did endure for ever." II. A WELL-GROUNDED RESOLUTION. Let us learn with Eli to "kiss the Son, lest He be angry" (Psa. ii. 12), nay, to kiss Him, and bow before Him when He is angry; to offer Him up a peace-offering, our wills, of more power than a hecatomb, than all our numerous fasts and sermons, to appease His wrath. . . . This is the truest surrender we can make. . . . "I do not only obey God, and do what He would have me, but I am of His mind," saith the heathen Seneca. . . . The stubbornest knee may be made to bow, and obedience may be constrained. But the true Israelite doeth it with joy and readiness, and though he receive a blow he counteth it as a favour, for He that gave it hath taught him an art to make it so. (*Anthony Faringdon.*)

Peaceable fruit of righteousness:—So long as things went well with Eli he had given no evidence of being one of God's true children. But the sore pressure of God's judgment upon him brings out the good in his character, which lay beneath the surface. The fragrant leaf must be crushed, before it will give out the perfume that is in it. The pebble must be cut and filed and rubbed by the jeweller, before the beautiful veining which runs through the heart of it can be brought to light. (*Dean Goulburn.*) Archbishop Whitgift, when he was paralysed and his speech affected, could be heard to say nothing distinctly but this: "Pro Ecclesiâ Dei," "Pro Ecclesiâ Dei," ("For the Church of God.") The Church of God was nearer to his heart than his own troubles and approaching death. (*Ibid.*) *Resignation in suffering*:—You are aware that in the Christian character there are what are called the active and the passive graces. It is not enough for us to ask what we do, but we must also ask how we suffer. I. LET US ATTEND TO THE NATURE OF THAT SUBMISSION TO GOD OF WHICH WE HAVE AN EXAMPLE IN THE MEMORABLE ELI. 1. Submission to God does not suppose insensibility to the afflictions under which we are called to cultivate it. We are allowed to mourn, though we are not allowed to murmur. Religion does not exact stoicism of its subjects. 2. This submission, in the second place, does not suppose that we are not to employ the means which are within our power, with a view to the prevention of evil. Our employment of means, with a view to prevent evil from falling upon us, is not at all inconsistent with a feeling of submission to the will of God. 3. Nor, in the third place, is prayer to God against evil, incon-

sistent with submission to Him under it, if He should see fit to visit us with it. We must not, indeed, open our mouth against God, but we may open our mouth to God. But then, let us inquire what this submission actually implies. 1. Why, in the first place, it implies that we justify God in every thing that He does—that however much we may blame ourselves, we attach no blame to God. Now, this is something; and I am afraid it is more than all of us at all times experience. 2. But submission involves more than this: it involves in it, that we approve of all that God does. 3. Then, lastly, this submission supposes that we cleave to God in the midst of all. II. Let us notice THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS SUBMISSION TO GOD RESTS. First, then, it rests on the sovereignty of God. 2. Then, secondly, on the ground of the righteousness and justice of God, we ought to submit to Him. 2. Then, again, the unchangeableness of God should also inspire us with a feeling of resignation and submission. III. SOME PRACTICAL EFFECTS OR FRUITS OF THIS SUBMISSION TO GOD. Now, there are some evils which it will prevent, and there are some direct and absolute benefits which it will ensure. First, there are evils which it will prevent. It will prevent rash conclusions. Again, this submission to God will prevent immoderate sorrow. In the next place, this will prevent sinful staggerings. This is a scriptural phrase. It is said of Abraham that "he staggered not." Sometimes a sudden affliction comes upon us; and, like a flash of lightning across our path, it surprises us. Then, as to the positive benefits which this feeling—this habit—this virtue of submission will insure to us, it will give us, in the first place, inward peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." Therefore, this will also bring along with it enduring patience—a noble virtue! Patience is one of the finest moral virtues! Lastly, another positive advantage is that it will excite praise and thanksgiving. The language, the spirit of the text, is not to be attained, perhaps, all at once. (*J. E. Beaumont.*) *Resignation to the Divine Will*:—Let us see what virtue Eli manifests in the text; then, how he displayed it; and, what lessons may be drawn from the subject. I. THE VIRTUE. 1. It was conformity to the Will of God. Viewed in relation to God, this virtue is based upon the realisation of His goodness, and that therefore His will is always just and good and wise. 2. Further, that nothing happens unless it is designed or permitted by Him. Eli's instinctive expression, "It is the Lord," reveals the habit of his soul to discern God's hand in all things. 3. But the words express the entire resignation of his own will to the will of God. In this lies the virtue. It was not a mere emotion, but an act of that within him must have been a habit. Difficult occasions do not create virtues, but call them into operation. 4. Holy Scripture supplies us with many instances of conformity of will to God, which is a law which holds good throughout the spiritual sphere, as that of gravitation does in the natural sphere: e.g. the answer of the Shunammite, when her child had died, "It is well," or "Peace" (2 Kings iv. 26). Again, Job's wonderful resignation, expressed by the words, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job i. 21). II. HOW DISPLAYED. 1. Promptly. There was no hesitation or delay. We know how, when some great loss is broken to us, for a time we are apt to be overwhelmed, dazed, and bewildered with grief, and want a little pause before we can gather ourselves together again and attempt to cry, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." But with the aged Eli, the accents of resignation followed immediately upon the announcement of the evils which would befall him and his house. He apparently sustained the shock without perturbation, though evidently a man of deep affections. 2. Humbly. Men often disdain to be corrected by their juniors, but Eli displayed no such sensitiveness. Though judge and priest, he heard with humbleness of mind the tale of woes and denunciation from the lips of the innocent child, and expressed the justice of what God was about to bring upon him. Most painful and humiliating, and, as far as this life was concerned, irretrievable; yet no word of murmuring or self-defence escaped from his mouth. 3. Absolutely. "Let Him do what seemeth Him good." Not "what seemeth good to me." This is true liberty of spirit. So the greatness of Eli's prompt, humble, and absolute resignation is accentuated by the consideration of the time when he lived and the circumstances of the period. III. LESSONS. 1. We are warned, by the judgments upon Eli and his family, of the momentousness of the duty of rebuking sin, and especially on the part of parents, rulers, and priests. 2. The practice of conforming the will to God in all the events of life, and that with the same features of promptness, lowliness, and entirety as Eli manifested, is the chief

lesson from the text. 8. Further, to remember that we can learn conformity from the self-surrender of Christ to His Father's will, especially in His Passion and death, and that we are aided in the production of this grace by the presence of the Holy Ghost; so that to say, "Not my will, but Thine, be done," is easier for us than it was for Eli. 4. The root of his conformity of will comes to view at the moment of his death. He bore up when he heard the tidings of the great slaughter of the people, and that his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were dead; but when he was told that the ark of God was taken he fell backward and died. Evidently God, and the things of God—notwithstanding his past great and culpable negligence—held the first place in his heart; hence this submission to His Will. (*Canon Hutchings, M.A.*) *Faith surviving sorrow*:—"A few weeks ago, in a city of Nebraska, I was holding meetings. There came to that city my dear friend, Commander Booth-Tucker. It was the city of Omaha. I shall never forget my talk with him there. I said to him, 'Commander, the passing of your beloved wife was one of the things that I freely confess I cannot understand.' He looked at me across the breakfast-table, his eyes wet with tears, and yet his face radiant with that light which never shone on sea or land, and he said to me, 'Dear man, do you not know that the Cross can only be preached by tragedy?' Then he told me this incident: 'When I and my wife were last in Chicago, I was trying to lead a sceptic to Christ in a meeting. At last the sceptic said, with a cold, glittering eye and a sarcastic voice, "It is all very well. You mean well; but I lost my faith in God when my wife was taken out of my home. It is all very well; but if that beautiful woman at your side lay dead and cold by you, how would you believe in God?"' Within one month she had been taken through the awful tragedy of a railway accident, and the Commander went back to Chicago, and, in the hearing of a vast multitude, said, 'Here in the midst of the crowd, standing by the side of my dead wife as I take her to burial, I want to say that I still believe in God, and love Him, and know Him.' (*Campbell Morgan, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. **And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him.**—*Samuel*:—It is the design of the present discourse to show what was implied in God's being with Samuel. I. This implied THAT GOD PRESERVED HIS LIFE AND HEALTH. While other children died, Samuel lived, and grew in stature and strength. He could gratefully say, "I am old and grey-headed." Long life is often represented as the natural effect and temporal reward of early piety. II. God's being with him implied THAT HE PRESERVED HIM FROM MORAL AS WELL AS NATURAL EVIL. He lived in an evil day. All orders and ages of men had grown corrupt, and every kind of error, delusion, and vice prevailed. Samuel, therefore, was greatly exposed to be carried away by the torrent of moral corruption, and nothing but the presence of God could preserve him from being overwhelmed and destroyed. But God was with him and he with God; for he lived as seeing Him who is invisible. A love to God, and a sense of His constant presence, made him hate and avoid every sinful course. This was certainly owing to God's being with him, and restraining the native depravity of his heart. It is easy for God to keep the heart of those who constantly lean upon Him. III. God's being with Samuel implied HIS CONSTANT GUIDANCE IN THE PATH OF DUTY. Accordingly we find that God did from time to time, direct him in duty. He directed him to bear His solemn messages to Eli and his house. He directed him to comply with the voice of the people, and anoint Saul to be king over Israel. And He directed him, at the hazard of his life, to anoint David, the son of Jesse, to succeed Saul on the throne which he then claimed and possessed. Besides directing him in extraordinary cases, whither to go, what to do, and what to say, He directed him in all his common and daily conduct. IV. God's being with Samuel implied THAT HE AFFORDED HIM ASSISTANCE IN THE DISCHARGE OF DUTY. Samuel was constantly dependent on God to enable him to do his duty, after he was led to the knowledge of it. He was called to many arduous and self-denying duties, which he would have neglected to perform if God had not inspired him with courage, resolution, and zeal. He was at first afraid to deliver the Divine messages to Eli. It was a dangerous duty to anoint David king over Israel, while Saul his enemy was on the throne. V. God's being with Samuel implied THAT HE SUCCEEDED, AS WELL AS GUIDED AND ASSISTED, HIM IN DUTY. Men may form wise and good designs, and pursue them with activity and diligence, but without success. In all their undertakings, it depends upon God whether they shall obtain the object of their wishes. VI. That God's being with Samuel implied THAT HE MADE HIM EMINENTLY USEFUL IN HIS DAY AND GENERATION.

God made Samuel uncommonly useful in various ways. 1. By his predictions. He early called him and ordained him a prophet, to reveal His will to His chosen people. 2. God made Samuel useful by his instructions. Though he was not a priest, yet he was an eminent instructor. He was the first that taught the school of the prophets; which was a most excellent institution, and continued in the nation until after the Babylonish captivity, when synagogues were first established and multiplied in the land. But, beside this, he taught the people at large, and restrained them from the gross practices and errors to which they were exposed, while there was no king nor faithful priests in the nation. 3. God made Samuel very useful, by clothing him with civil authority, and giving him opportunity to administer justice through the land. We read, "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." 4. God gave Samuel the spirit of grace and supplication, by which He enabled him to draw down national blessings, and avert national calamities. David mentions the efficacy of Samuel's prayers, as an example to the people of God in the days of darkness and distress. "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool: for He is holy. Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name: they called upon the Lord, and He answered them." 5. His example crowned and established his character in the view of the nation. He was called to visit all parts of Judea, which gave the people a peculiar opportunity of seeing his holy and exemplary conduct. This constrained them to believe that God was with him, for he carried the visible appearance of living near to God, and of enjoying His gracious presence.

IMPROVEMENT. 1. It appears from the character and conduct of Samuel that pious and faithful parents may do much to promote the piety and usefulness of their children. 2. We learn from the character and life of Samuel the importance of parents being pious. 3. The character and conduct of Samuel show the peculiar obligations of those who have been the subjects of parental dedication and instruction, to make a personal dedication of themselves to the Lord. 4. In the view of the character and conduct of Samuel we may see the great importance of early piety. 5. We learn from what has been said that it is very criminal to obstruct early piety. (*N. Emmons.*) *Here to grow:*—We are not in this world merely to do the pieces of work, large or small, that are set over against our hand. We are here to grow in strength and beauty of character. And it is not hard to see how this growth may go on continually amid life's daily toil and cares. If we are diligent, careful, faithful, prompt, accurate, energetic in the doing of a thousand little things of common life, we are building these qualities meanwhile into our soul's fabric. Thus we are ever learning by doing and growing by doing. There is an unseen spiritual building arising within us continually as we plod on in our unending tasks. Negligence in common duties mars our character. Faithfulness in work builds beauty into the soul. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *The character of Samuel:*—I. Consider SAMUEL IN HIS EARLY ADVANTAGES. He was in a special and peculiar sense a child of prayer. II. But let us come to contemplate THE RESULTS OF THIS EARLY TRAINING, AS THEY SOON DEVELOPED THEMSELVES IN THE PERSON AND CHARACTER OF SAMUEL. 1. Observe his attention to all appointed duties. This is seen in the promptness with which he rises to obey the fancied summons of Eli even at midnight. 2. Let us consider next the deportment of Samuel towards others. Thus we find it was always modest, and courteous, and respectful. We never find him elated by the honourable position to which he had been advanced. 3. But once more, notice among the personal qualities of Samuel his steady, uncompromising faithfulness. Removed at so early a period from the pious oversight of his parents; left only to the instructions of the feeble, and as it would seem now careless Eli; compelled to be a witness of the fruits of his master's sinful negligence, and even to be the daily associate of that master's profligate and abandoned sons—we could hardly have wondered if, infected by the surrounding contagion, this plant of early and holy promise had withered and faded away. "But the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." III. But let us consider Samuel, in the last place, AS HE STOOD HIGH IN THE FAVOUR OF GOD. This is especially observable in the circumstances of his prophetic calling. The latter times of the Judges were times of great spiritual decline. Good men were scattered like two or three berries on the top of a bough. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The ministry of Samuel:*—These passages (xii. 23) bring out some of the most characteristic points in the life of Samuel the prophet. The child devoutly surrendered became the first and greatest of the prophets, the man chosen to close the order of judges and inaugurate the government of kings. It is as the first of the

prophets that he appears before us in our text: "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." 1. First, our text tells us, he grew. What a child will become depends very much on its capacity of growth. There are some who never grow, or, if they grow at all, grow feebly or imperfectly. Their body is stunted, their mind is undeveloped, their character makes no progress. But where there is full power of growth there is hardly any degree of eminence which may not be attained. Growth mainly results from two things, vigour of life, and suitable culture. Samuel enjoyed both these. But this growth was aided by culture. That culture began in infancy. He was brought to the house of the Lord; he was placed under the care of Eli—the devout, the true, though too indulgent Eli. Nor were there other influences wanting. His mother never ceased to pray for him. His mother came up every year, we are told, to offer the early sacrifice, and brought with her a little mantle, or coat, woven by her own hands. Oh! the anticipation of that yearly visit. Oh! the joy with which she folded him in her arms, and clothed him in his new dress. Oh! the love which she poured into the susceptible heart from hers, with fondest kisses and tenderest prayers. The impression of those visits lived on from year to year, and more than any other influence served to keep his heart pure, and loving, and devout. Above all, God Himself took Samuel in hand, and completed his education by His own Spirit. 2. The second thing our text tells us is that the Lord was with him. The Lord was with him, a blessing of the most comprehensive and sufficing kind, a blessing which seems to include all other blessings in itself. Only thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord, and whom the Lord delighteth to honour. The Lord was with Jacob to keep him safely in all the places whither he went. The Lord was with Joseph, and all that he did prospered. The Lord was with Moses, "certainly I shall be with thee," and with confidence before which even Pharaoh quailed, he wrought deliverance for Israel. The Lord was with Joshua as He was with Moses, and he became strong and very courageous, and with the people took possession of the land. Paul at his first examination before Cæsar was left alone, all men forsook him, nevertheless the Lord stood with him, and his preaching was so fully known that all the Gentiles heard, and he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And so "the Lord was with Samuel, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." 3. Thirdly, "the Lord did let none of his words fall to the ground." Because he had the capacity which was revealed in growth, and because the Lord was with him, therefore his words were words of power and took lasting effect. His predictions came to pass because they were really the utterances of the Spirit. Perhaps we have never grown as Samuel did, never grown up to such an apprehension of Divine truth that it has become a living power in our souls, and therefore we cannot skilfully unfold it to others. Perhaps we have never felt that the Lord was with us when we spake, and so the one influence which alone could open the heart was wanting. And the other passages I have read as part of my text show us how this was. First, because he adhered to his purpose: "I will teach you the good and right way." What Samuel taught he felt to be of the first importance, and he could not be sure that what he taught would, in the highest sense, be good and right, unless it were Divine. Like all the ancient prophets he kept his ear open to catch the words of the heavenly oracle, his heart open to receive the celestial fire. If his teaching were of God, it would be true in its substance, decisive in its affirmations, and, however severely tested, would firmly stand. When men speak of "advanced thought" in the present day, and mean by it thought which is simply human, wrought out by man's unaided reason, and freed from the assumption of being Divine, they might be indulging in the severest irony. Thought that springs up in a feeble human mind in advance of that which flows from the Divine! Thought originating in perceptions which are dim, limited, liable to be distorted, in advance of thought originating in perceptions which are clear, illimitable, and unperturbed! Save us from such progress as this. To a noble soul there is something stimulating in the persuasion that God has spoken to man, and that we have His words. Then, secondly, our text tells that he tolerated nothing that was unreal. When Samuel saw the miserable dissimulation which Saul was practising in covering his self-will with the cloak of sacrifice, he scornfully said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the blood of rams." The deep sincerity of the man, his determination to unmask all that was hollow

and unreal, his demand for substance, not show, was another element of power in virtue of which none of his words fell to the ground. And finally he continued instant in prayer. (*J. Harrison.*) *The growth of character*:—1. Let us reflect, first, upon this description as applying to the ancient seer of Israel. "And Samuel grew." It was a saying of the poet Southey that, live as long as we may, the first twenty years are the longest half of our life. Why is this? There is a physiological and there is a moral reason for it. The physiological cause lies in the more vivid sensibility of youth—the soft wax is not yet set, the tender branch is not yet hardened. The moral cause lies in the greater variety of influences to which we are subject before life's choice is made, and ere we have definitely cast in our lot either with the good or the bad. And both these are gathered into one statement if we say that the first twenty years are the longest half of life because they are the period of vigorous and determining growth; that being the analysis of the growing process—vigour of life and determination of life. Hence the significance of the clause, "And Samuel grew." There was the vigour of the lad's life; wherefore the young limbs lengthened and the supple frame waxed strong, and he developed into a magnificent man. And there was the determination of the lad's life towards wise and pure conduct; wherefore he eschewed the evil example of Eli's sons, and set himself to walk in the good and right way. This persistent emphasis upon the growth of the prophet is intended to teach that the secret of his even and consistent life is to be found in his early piety. The visitations of God's grace were upon him like the dews of the morning; he grew, and when he was old and grey-headed, he remained like a tree rooted in its place. Occasionally a wild, ungodly youth is followed by a consecrated manhood, for the grace of God can work miracles; and this has been seen in such lives as Augustine's, Ignatius Loyola's, John Bunyan's, and John Newton's. But the law is that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." And even those apparent exceptions to which I refer do really confirm the rule, since, as the greatest of ecclesiastical historians has pointed out, the men who are converted after a lawless and reckless youth usually become Christians of an ill-wrought and inharmonious type. Always the Christliest saints are those of whom it can be said, as of the first prophet, "And Samuel grew." 2. The text goes on to speak of a second characteristic. "And the Lord was with him." Alone, he would have fallen. Alone, his spiritual nature would have sickened in the atmosphere of uncleanness; he would have learned to tolerate the crimes of his neighbours—it may have been to outdo them. 3. Once more the text tells us that "the Lord did let none of his words fall to the ground." This was the natural and appropriate result. (*W. J. Woods, B.A.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **And all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.**—From Dan to Beer-sheba—that is to say, from Plymouth to Aberdeen—all the people in the towns and villages of Israel knew that there was come a new thing on the earth, that God was now speaking by the mouth of a little child. One of the first lessons which comes from the study of this story is, that bad men and bad things are doomed. Nothing can keep alive that which God has condemned. I look upon Hophni and Phinehas as representatives of that which was bad. "All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord," and at the same time, that Hophni and Phinehas were to be removed from the face of the earth. We are surrounded by evil; bad men and bad things are all around us. But I want those of us who believe in God to cheer ourselves with the thought that nothing will live for ever but that which is good. No wrong thing can live for ever. Slavery was a giant. It is a giant yet in Africa; but its brother, American slavery, came down never to rise. Tyranny is a doomed thing. "Samuel is established to be a prophet of the Lord;" and I do not care who Hophni and Phinehas are if you will only do your duty. Be brave, and God will see you through. 2. The second lesson I want to teach to-day is this: Mothers, get your children ready, "that Samuel may be established to be a prophet of the Lord." Oh! what honour came to Hannah through Samuel. We should encourage our children to have right ideas, and encourage them to propagate their ideas. Never was there a time when

there was so much room for individual goodness. 3. I should say, further, that early consecration is the pathway to honour and greatness. What a great man Samuel became. (*T. Champness.*) *The call and prophetic work of Samuel*:—I. In the first place, we will consider THE CALL OF SAMUEL. II. But in the second place let us consider THE PROPHETIC WORK OF SAMUEL. 1. First, his work was to announce the Divine mind by predicting future events. 2. In the second place, another part of the prophetic work of Samuel was to revive religion and restore the worship of God among the nation. For at the time that Samuel was introduced to the prophetic office, religion was exceedingly low, indescribably low. 3. But, in the next place, another part of his work was to decide all doubtful cases, according to the will and the law of God. The most difficult of all those cases that came before him was the introduction of monarchy into the theocracy. 4. Another part of the work of Samuel was to introduce and to perpetuate a race of prophets, a series of prophets, in the Jewish church. 5. But again: another part of his work was to write a portion of the inspired volume—to communicate a part of the mind of God by inspiration. 1. Let us learn from this, in the first place, that early piety is of great influence in the Christian church. 2. And, in the second place, let us learn how a youth, in very disadvantageous circumstances, may be of great use in reviving religion in his day and generation. (*T. W. Jenkyn, D.D.*) *Communications from God*:—1. What a dreary, hopeless state it is to live without any communications from God! Man did never in fact live entirely without such communications. God did reveal Himself "at sundry times and in divers manners," sometimes dropping His communications for a long tract of time, but always renewing them again. It has indeed been said by doubters and unbelievers that God has given man a conscience and a moral sense, which speak to him in God's name, and teach him what is right and wrong, and that this is quite sufficient communication from God to make us good and happy, and that we need nothing further. But what is it that our conscience, which is indeed the voice of God within us, teaches us first and before all things else? It is that we have gone astray from the rule of right. No man, without some better help than conscience lent him, ever lived fully up to the requirements of his conscience. 2. But again: "God revealed Himself to Samuel by the word of the Lord." We may justly reflect that He has done this more completely to ourselves than He did to Samuel. Now, do we each one of us practically act as if we fully believed that constant revelations from God were necessary to make us holy and happy? Do we make daily devout use of the Holy Scripture, which is our great means of receiving revelations, or, in other words, communications from God? (*Dean Goulburn.*)

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 8. Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?—*The advantages of defeat*:—This cry of amazement stands between two defeats. Defeat astounded Israel: it fell in despite of priests and religious parade. We should study defeats. Personal and corporate both. Army-cadets at Sandhurst and Woolwich prepare to achieve victory by the study of military failures. Good will come of such study spite of its sadness. I. DEFEAT THAT COMPELS ENQUIRY INTO OUR MORAL DISCIPLINE IS GOOD. 1. Defeat comes as a surprise. We are in the hosts of the Great King. We have been educated to expect victory. Our base, our supplies, our alliances, our history, have led to this. 2. We should be grateful to the first questioner in the Church, who demands research into the Church's character. "Wherefore?" is the prelude of "Hallelujah." So, too, in the life of the soul. 3. Enquiry will demonstrate the omission of some condition essential to success. A little later (ch. vii. 9) Samuel explains the double disaster. Our "Leader and Commander" has not promised unconditional triumph. "The promises are made to character." "If ye do return unto the Lord . . . He will deliver you." 4. Each day may be with us a day of battle. II. IT IS NO SMALL GAIN WHEN WE SEE DEFEAT TO BE THE FRUIT OF PAST NEGLECT. 1. Had Israel been true long before, there would have been no

Philistines now to vex and humiliate them. At the conquest of Canaan they had their chance. But fatigue set in, and enthusiasm faded away before the conquest could be completed. Aged and crippled remnants of heathen nations were left. Jebusites in Mount Zion, Philistines on the south-west border. They were the seed of future miseries and shames to Israel. 2. To every Christian there comes a time of special power and possibility. By laying hold on God's strength it would be easy then to slay our native foes, our inbred sins. Conversion should bring us more than pardon. It should bring the mastery of sin. Too often, the forgiven soul carries into the Christian life sins which, though crippled, are by no means dead. Rightly taught, we should seek their extermination. III. IT IS AN ADVANTAGE WHEN DEFEAT PROVES THE WORTHLESSNESS OF SUPERSTITION. 1. Some sacred warrior, looking on the field with its 4,000 slain, cried, "Let us fetch the Ark . . . that it may save us." Superstition added to sin does not improve the position. Israel called for the Ark, instead of for the God of the Ark and of the nation. 2. High regard for the Ark was natural. Read its history. It was made on a Divine plan; and housed in the Holy of holies; it was the resting place of the Shekinah. By grand histories it had taken a deep place in their reverence and love. Here lay the danger. It is easy to cling to the visible loved symbol, whilst the invisible world of truth for which it stands is "let slip." We may carry to life's battlefields all our religious methods, and fail in the fight. Faith in God would have purified their hearts (Acts xv. 9) and made them heroes in the fight. The historian Napier, speaking of our army in Spain, said, "Incalculable is the preponderance of moral power in war." Superstition may be described as moral faith lowered from the living God to things. It is incapable of faith's valiant movements. It has no grip of God. 3. Superstition shows itself in the Christian congregation. A modern form of it is Ecclesiolatry. The Church is unspeakably great, sacred, and dear. And it is not difficult to set it in the soul's faith and love as a rival to God. IV. IT IS A GAIN WHEN DEFEAT REMOVES UNWORTHY LEADERS. The peril of Israel lay as much in their leaders' unworthiness as in their own vices. The nation was like a drifting ship. With men of high character at the helm she might have recovered leeway. But of her steersmen two were drunk with iniquity, and one lacked energy to the point of criminality. It was necessary to get rid of these helmsmen if the ship's company was to be saved. First, Hophni and Phinehas were slain (ch. iv. 11). Next, Eli fell. With the death of these men a new era opens—the epoch of Samuel. Storms shake rotten wood from living trees to make way for fresh and healthy development. V. THOUGH DEFEATED, WE MAY WIN ON THE SAME SITE ERE LONG. The battles were fought at Ebenezer (ch. iv. 1). Here the armies met again soon (ch. vii. 12). Then victory sat on the banners of Israel. It was a day of praise and monument raising. We improve our record of deeds done when we improve our character. (1 Sam. vii. 2, 4.) Let no man lose heart. Rather let him seek victory through repentance and faith in God alone. Defeat is not God's design for us. "Thanks be to God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." (*James Dunk.*) **Let us fetch the ark . . . that when it cometh among us it may save us.** (Compare with ver. 10, and chap. vii. 3.)—*Superstition and religion*:—"Let us fetch the ark." What was the ark? It was a chest made of wood. It was overlaid with pure gold, within and without, and crowned with a mercy seat of pure gold. What was its purpose? It was a material thing representing a spiritual idea. It was a thing made with hands to symbolise things not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It was a temporality pointing to a spirituality. That is how humanity deals with unseen presences; it makes visible vestures for them, garments that can be touched. Here are ten thousand men, a nation's army, moving with one step, to one music, on one mission. They are possessed by one sentiment, that of patriotism; they are swayed by one idea, that of freedom. But these sentiments and ideas are intangible, spiritual, unseen. The nation must give them visibility; they must become enshrined in vestures that can be handled and seen. So we give our army a flag, and a flag which can be touched represents the unseen which cannot be touched; it represents patriotic sentiment, national enthusiasm, the common hope. Through that flag there gleams the idea of duty and of right. To abuse the flag is to insult the nation. The ermine which our judges wear is the symbol of an idea. That visible robe represents the unseen vesture of authority with which their fellow-men have clothed them. All these are visible representatives of unseen forces and powers. Our very instinct leads us to give these unseen pre-

sences a local and visible habitation and name. And here was God, an unseen Power, and men hungered for some material symbol to represent the unseen and eternal. And God said: "Make an ark of wood and gold," and it shall stand as the symbol of the meeting of God and man, the confluence of time and eternity, the blending of the unseen influences of heaven with the unseen aspirations of earth. Now the character of symbols depends upon the character of man. As men become better, symbols become enriched. As men deteriorate symbols become degraded. Is that not so with the commonest of all symbolism which we call language? These words which I am now addressing to you are all symbols which I am using to represent my unseen thought. The corruption of language follows the degradation of man. Language loses significance; it becomes debased, and its deterioration must be traced to its essential cause in the deterioration of man. It is the same with other symbols besides language. They become emptied of their royal significance when men lose their royalty. The more high-minded is the soldier, the more illustrious is his flag; the more debased is the soldier, the more vulgar is the flag. And so symbols wait upon character, they can become gradually impoverished in their meaning, until at length they become as empty as those shells which are strewn in myriads along our shores, empty houses which have lost their tenants, forsaken and lifeless forms. But now, mark you, a strange foible and trick of human nature. When our feelings and enthusiasms have deteriorated, and the symbols have lost their life, we are prone to hug the empty shell, and we delude ourselves into the belief that the empty symbol can do what only could be done by its living guest. Thoroughly bad men wear a crucifix, an empty shell, a cross without a Saviour. One of the most notorious criminals of our time was found with a crucifix next to his skin. Now let us realise their position. They had lost the purity of their character, and they tried to pervert a religious symbolism into unreligious magic. They thought that a dead symbol would do the work of a living devotion, and that is superstition. It would be just as reasonable for a man who was being drawn headlong to ruin by drink to seek and save himself by putting on a blue ribbon, a symbol of sobriety, and yet to continue to grovel in the waste and slough of passion and lust. For bad men to send for the ark to protect them is evidence that their religion has degraded them into the grossest superstition. There are homes in which Bibles are kept, not to be read, but because their presence is supposed to surround the home with a certain sanctity and protection. But are we not prone to use these symbols and means as the Israelites used their ark, to obtain a sort of magical protection from physical peril, and not deliverance from the captivity of sin? And is not the divine purpose of prayer sometimes forgotten, and is it not often employed as a spell to save us from poverty and loss of danger, but not from sin? There is a short paragraph in the life of one of the saintliest men of our time which I will read to you, as it specially illustrates my argument. In one of his letters, written in manhood, he writes: "Once I recollect I was taken up with nine other boys at school to be punished, and I prayed to escape the shame. The master, previous to flogging all the others, said to me, to the great bewilderment of the whole school: 'Little boy, I excuse you, I have particular reasons for it.' That incident settled my mind for a long time; only I doubt whether it did me any good, for prayer became a charm. I knew I carried about a talisman—which would save me from all harm. It did not make me better, it simply gave me security." Will you mark that last phrase? "It did not make me better; it simply gave me security." That was what the ark did for the Philistines; is that all that prayer does for us—composing our fears but not affecting our morals, giving us a sense of security, but not delivering us from our sin? If the exercise has been thus debased, it will betray us when we need it most; refuge will fail us when we stand at last in the presence of the pure and holy God. (*J. H. Jowett.*) *A superstitious and religious use of sacred things* (1 Chron. xiii. 14):—"In the first text the children of Israel say, 'Let us fetch the ark of the covenant out of Shiloh unto us.' The bringing of the ark then from Shiloh was a free and spontaneous act on their part. They had a purpose in sending for it—to save them out of the hand of their enemies. Remembering what had been done at Jordan and at Jericho through the instrumentality of the ark, they were satisfied that by having it with them they would be able to triumph over their foes. Consequently, on its being brought into the camp there was great joy on the part of the Israelites (ver. 5) and great consternation among the Philistines (vers. 6, 7). The Israelites were disappointed in their expectations, for they,

instead of being victorious, were defeated with great slaughter (vers. 10, 11). From the second text we learn that the ark came into the house of Obed-edom more by accident than anything else. He did not send for it; he did not express a wish to have it; and he had not even the expectation of its ever being brought into his house. These incidents, when placed side by side, are very instructive. The Israelites sent for the ark, and took it with them to battle, but for all that they lost the day. Obed-edom did not send for the ark, but only received it into his house, and the Lord blessed his family and all that he had. To the Israelites, who sent for it, the ark became a savour of death unto death; but to Obed-edom, who received it into his house, the same ark became a savour of life unto life. In the one case the ark was a snare, and in the other a blessing.

I. THE SUPERSTITIOUS USE OF SACRED THINGS. On the part of an irreligious man there is a tendency, when in sore straits, to betake himself, not to God, but to reading the Bible, or to what he calls prayer, in the hope that by "sending for the ark" his difficulties will be removed. And on the part of all there is a danger of our looking upon things sacred as charms, and therefore of contenting ourselves with keeping the Sabbath, reading the Bible, going to church, partaking of the sacrament, as if some special virtue was of necessity connected with the simple discharge of these duties. They are useful and profitable as means, but it is only in that light that they can profit any one.

II. THE RELIGIOUS USE OF SACRED THINGS. Respecting Obed-edom very little is known, but we are warranted in believing that he was a good man. He revered the ark not for its own sake, but as the token of God's presence, and he was therefore blessed in his house and all that he had. His conduct suggests the profitableness of religion at home.

1. It is necessary to observe the word that is employed. It is not said that he was enriched, that he was made a prosperous man, or that he was raised above difficulties or trials. He was blessed.

2. He was blessed in his house, in his own person, in his family, in his dependents.

3. He was blessed in all that he had. He may have had burdens, he may have had trials, but he was blessed in his business, in his joy, in his sorrows. (*P. Robertson, A.M.*) *The form and spirit of religion*:—As is man, such must his religion be. Now, man is a compound being. To speak correctly, man is a spiritual being: he hath within him a soul, a substance far beyond the bounds of matter. But man is also made up of a body as well as a soul. He is not pure spirit, his spirit is incarnate in flesh and blood. Now, such is our religion. The religion of God is, as to its vitality, purely spiritual—always so; but since man is made of flesh as well as of spirit, it seemed necessary that his religion should have something of the outward, external, and material, in which to embody the spiritual, or else man would not have been able to lay hold upon it. Our religion, then, has an outward form even to this day; for the apostle Paul, when he spoke of professing Christians, spoke of some who had "a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof." So that it is still true, though I confess not to the same extent as it was in the days of Moses, that religion must have a body, that the spiritual thing may come out palpably before our vision, and that we may see it.

I. In the first place then, THE FORM OF RELIGION IS TO BE REVERENTLY OBSERVED. This ark of the covenant was with the Jews the most sacred instrument of their religion. And, indeed, they had great reason in the days of Samuel to reverence this ark, for you will recollect that when Moses went to war with the Midianites, a great slaughter of that people was occasioned by the fact that Eleazar, the high priest, with a silver trumpet, stood in the forefront of the battle, bearing in his hands the holy instrument of the law—that is, the ark; and it was by the presence of this ark that the victory was achieved. It was by this ark, too, that the river Jordan was dried up. And when they had landed in the promised country, you remember it was by this ark that the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground. These people, therefore, thought if they could once get the ark, it would be all right, and they would be sure to triumph; and, while I shall have in the second head, to insist upon it that they were wrong in superstitiously imputing strength to the poor chest, yet the ark was to be reverently observed, for it was the outward symbol of a high spiritual truth, and it was never to be treated with any indignity.

1. It is quite certain, in the first place, that the form of religion must never be altered. You remember that this ark was made by Moses, according to the pattern that God had given him in the mount. Now, the outward forms of our religion, if they be correct, are made by God. His two great ordinances of Baptism and

the Lord's Supper are sent for us from on high. I dare not alter either of them. 2. And as the form must not be altered, so it must not be despised. These Philistines despised the ark. To laugh at the Sabbath, to despise the ordinances of God's House, to neglect the means of grace, to call the outward form of religion a vain thing—all this is highly offensive in the sight of God. He will have us remember that while the form is not the life, yet the form is to be respected for the sake of the life which it contains; the body is to be venerated for the sake of the inward soul; and, as I would have no man maim my body, even though in maiming it he might not be able to wound my soul, so God would have no man maim the outward parts of religion, although it is true no man can touch the real vitality of it. 3. As the outward form is neither to be altered nor despised, so neither is to be intruded upon by unworthy persons. The Bethshemites had no intention whatever of dishonouring the ark. They had a vain curiosity to look within, and the sight of these marvellous tables of stone struck them with death; for the law, when it is not covered by the mercy-seat, is death to any man, and it was death to them. Now, you will easily remember how very solemn a penalty is attached to any man's intruding into the outward form of religion when he is not called to do so. Let me quote this awful passage: "He" (speaking of the Lord's Supper) "that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." 4. And now, let me remark, that the outward things of God are to be diligently cared for and loved. II. Now, it is a notorious fact, that **THE VERY MEN WHO HAVE THE LEAST IDEA OF WHAT SPIRITUAL RELIGION IS, ARE THE MEN WHO PAY THE MOST SUPERSTITIOUS ATTENTION TO OUTWARD FORMS.** We refer you again to this instance. These people would neither repent, nor pray, nor seek God and his prophets; yet they sought out this ark and trusted in it with superstitious veneration. Now, in every country where there has been any religion at all that is true, the great fact has come out very plainly, that the people who don't know anything about true religion, have always been the most careful about the forms. III. And now, in the last place, it is mine to warn you that to **TRUST IN CEREMONIES IS A MOST DECEITFUL THING, AND WILL END IN THE MOST TERRIFIC CONSEQUENCES.** When these people had got the ark into the camp, they shouted for joy, because they thought themselves quite safe; but, alas, they met with a greater defeat than before. Only four thousand men had been killed in the first battle, but in the second, thirty thousand footmen of Israel fell down dead. How vain are the hopes that men build upon their good works, and ceremonial observances! But there is one thing I want you to notice, and that is, that this ark not only could not give victory to Israel, but it could not preserve the lives of the priests themselves who carried it. This is a fatal blow to all who trust in the forms of religion. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Regard for the Ark of God:—*I. 'Tis so natural for men to claim the divine favour, in spite of their impieties; and when they disgrace the sanctuary, to rely upon the outward advantages and immunities of it. And 'tis to be feared the case is too much our own, to be confident of God's defence when we renounce Him in our lives, and to boast of the purity of our religion when we shelter our vices under it. Upon this calamity what counsel do the Israelites agree upon? Is there a solemn day of humiliation appointed by them? Do they resort to the Tabernacle of the Lord with tears and supplications? Do they bewail their own iniquities, and those of their forefathers? It was madness in them to presume that God would be their champion, as long as they retained their vices. II. We know what mighty veneration was paid to the Ark by God's express institution; and that He gave it to His people to distinguish them from the idolatrous world, both by a token of His extraordinary tuition, and by reserving them to Himself as a peculiar treasure. III. To return then to the Ark, and Eli's passionate concern for it, let us consider the grounds and reasonableness of it: 1. With reference to the dignity of the Ark; and, 2. With regard to the danger of it. (1.) I begin with the first excellency of the Ark, as it was the symbol of God's Presence. "There I will meet with thee" (Exod. xxv. 22). This then is the consequent thereof, That God blesses and defends a people with whom He dwells: And supposing the world to be governed by His Providence, we must acknowledge the necessity of His protection to succeed in any enterprise. To this purpose I shall argue upon two heads: (1.) That we may be secure in God; (2.) That we can be so in nothing else. (1.) That we may be secure in God, may appear upon three un-

deniable grounds; that no counsel can prosper in opposition to His wisdom; that no resistance can be made to His infinite power; and, that nothing can happen to us without His determination. From these considerations it may be seen how dismal a calamity it is to lose the protection of God; and how safe a nation is under this refuge, and this alone. Let us compare it with the imbecility and deceitfulness of all human supports; none of which can bear the weight of our confidence, or justify our reliance upon them; and much less exclusively to God. (2.) Having thus considered the Ark, as it was the authentic token of God's Presence; let us regard it, as it was the centre of the true religion: for thither the sacrifices were commanded, and the prayers of the congregation went constantly along with them; and to worship before it was in the sacred style to appear before the Lord. For the plainer view of that assertion we may briefly consider three things. (1.) That religion is the greatest improvement of human nature, and does more distinguish it than all the endowments of reason: and that which raiseth the dignity of a man, and gives him the most honourable character, must in proportion increase the lustre of a community. (2.) Religion doth by a natural tendency promote the temporal peace and prosperity of a nation. (3.) Religion doth by a moral efficacy make a people happy, in that it engageth God to favour and protect them; His Presence goes along with the Ark of His testimony; and they that serve Him faithfully, have an especial title to the guardianship of His Almighty goodness. (3.) Supposing then, that pure religion is the greatest blessing of mankind, as united into public bodies, what more naturally follows from hence, than that good men ought to be affected as Eli was, and to be most warmly concerned for the Ark of God? I shall briefly subjoin four reasons: (1.) Because the honour of God is dearer to them than anything else. (2.) Because nothing is more valuable to good men than what they expect in a better world; and desiring charitably for others what they justly prize for themselves, they consequently make religion their leading care. (3.) Another reason of concern for the Ark may be this, because God's protection is removed from a people together with His presence: and hereupon, in the prophetic vision, the glory of the Lord departed out of Jerusalem, to presignify the destruction of it. Wherefore, if God departs from a land, nothing but darkness and desolation can follow: and religion is the only way of retaining Him. 2. This brings me to a prospect of the Ark, namely, as it may be in danger by the sins of those who are in possession of it: and so it actually went into captivity, when the heart of good Eli was trembling for it. (1.) This judgment of God's removing Himself, and His Ark, is sometimes inflicted for national impenitence, when God hath long waited in vain for repentance of public sins. (2.) Another cause of God's removing His Ark, is the contempt of Divine truth, and the undervaluing of revealed religion, and of the Holy Scriptures. And when we treat them with scorn and niceness, or with sceptical pride and curiosity. No monarch will endure the despising of his royal proclamations: and we cannot think that God is less jealous for His holy word. The Tables of the Law were kept in the Ark, to intimate what value God was pleased to stamp upon them. (3.) A cause of God's withdrawing Himself and His Ark from a people, is the profaning of His worship: and this was the flagrant enormity which make it a spoil to the enemies of God under Eli's administration. (4.) Divisions and contentions about religion are another cause of desolation to it. (5.) Lastly, the abuse of the means of salvation, and unfruitfulness under them, doth often provoke God to withdraw them. And 'tis what our Lord threatens to His own people, the kingdom of God (that is, the Gospel, with the rich privileges of it) shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. IV. AND NOW TO CONCLUDE WITH SOME INFERENCES FROM WHAT HAS BEEN SAID. 1. Considering how necessary to us God's protection is, let us secure it as well as we can, and be careful not to unqualify ourselves for it. What the sins are that are most obstructive to our public peace, it is the business of the day to enquire impartially; and to dispossess them by prayer and fasting. 2. Considering that the great felicity of a nation is to have the true religion established in it, let us put a grateful value upon the communion of our Church; and bless God for the inestimable advantages of it; and improve them so well as to procure the continual preservation of them. 3. Considering how we ought to tremble in all the perils of the Ark, let us implore the Divine grace, that we may seriously lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; and let us

ask our own consciences whether we have not deserved that God should take away His gospel from us? 4. Let it be considered, that though we could be certain of having the Ark of God always with us; yet we should not be nearer to Him, nor to everlasting bliss, unless our adorations towards it were pure, and our lives answerable thereunto. And let us thus maintain the credit of our Church, and when the lustre of it will not be impaired by any eclipse. We think our religion is the best in the world; and if it be so, let not those that have a worse outstrip us in any virtue: let us strive to excel them in zeal and integrity, in peacefulness and moderation, in probity and temperance. (Z. Isham, D.D.) *The Ark of God in the camp*:—Two great lessons were taught the Israelites by God's revelation and dealings, viz., the peril of irreverence, the peril of superstition. I. PROFESSING CHRISTIANS, WHEN CONTENDING WITH THEIR SPIRITUAL FOES, ARE TEMPTED LIKE ISRAEL TO TAKE REFUGE IN SUPERSTITION, TO PUT THE FORM FOR THE REALITY. For instance, 1. Mistaken view of sacraments. Reception of sick and dying regarded as a guarantee of safety. 2. Mistaken use of the Bible. Supposed virtue in the bare reading of a chapter. Like Pharisees of our Lord's days, or Saul of Tarsus before conversion. 3. Mistaken view as to use of certain religious language—a "shibboleth." These may be all either means or signs of grace, and may be full of blessing; but in themselves they are profitless, like the ark without God's presence. II. PROFESSING CHRISTIANS, TRUSTING TO SUCH EXPEDIENTS, MEET WITH DISASTROUS FAILURE. 1. What did the ark contain? The tables of the law, which only condemned. These ungodly men only proclaimed their own condemnation. The law cannot save. 2. What gave it its special holiness? The presence of the Shekinah on the mercy-seat; God manifesting Himself in atonement of sin. When this was absent, the ark could not save, any more than the temple saved Jerusalem from her foes. III. PROFESSING CHRISTIANS SHOULD LEARN HEREFROM SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS. 1. God values the substance more than the shadow, the reality more than the form. He will even sacrifice His own ark rather than let it conduce to superstition. 2. God rejects superstitious worship, and requires the heart and sincerity. 3. The presence on the mercy-seat alone gives strength for conflict or peace in trouble. (Homilist.) *The Ark of God*:—1. Learn that the formal is useless without the spiritual. There is the ark, made as God dictated—a sacred thing: the law is there; the mercy-seat is there. Yet Israel falls by the arms of the Philistines, and the sacred shrine is taken by the hands of the idolaters. The formal never can save men; the institutional never can redeem society. This is, emphatically, the day of bringing in arks, societies, formalities, ceremonies. You have in your house an altar; that altar will be nothing influential in your life if you have it there merely for the sake of formality. 2. Learn that religion is not to be a mere convenience. The ark is not to be used as a magical spell. Holy things are not to be run to in extremity, and set up in order that men who are in peril may be saved. "That it may save us." That sounds like a modern expression! To be personally saved, to be delivered out of a pressing emergency or strait—that seems to be the one object which many people have in view when identifying themselves with religious institutions, Christian observances and fellowships. We must not play with our religion. We might guarantee that every place of worship would be filled at five o'clock in the morning and at twelve o'clock at night under given circumstances. Let there be a plague in the city—let men's hearts fail them with fear—and they will instantly flock to churches and chapels. That will not do! God is not to be moved by incantations, by decent formalities, and external reverence. He will answer the continuous cry of the life. 3. We learn that the Philistines took the ark of the covenant. But though they had captured the ark, that sacred shrine made itself terribly felt. (J. Parker, D.D.) *The Ark of God of no avail*:—It seemed a brilliant idea. Whichever of the elders first suggested it, it caught at once, and was promptly acted on. There were two great objections to it, but if they were so much as entertained they certainly had no effect given them. The first was, that the elders had no legitimate control over the ark. The custody of it belonged to the priests and the Levites, and Eli was the high priest. There is no reason to suppose that any means were taken to find out whether its removal to the camp was in accordance with the will of God; and as to the minds of the priests, Eli was probably passed over as too old and too blind to be consulted, and Hophni and Phinehas would be restrained by no scruples from an act which

every one seemed to approve. The second great objection to the step was that it was a superstitious and irreverent use of the symbol of God's presence. Evidently the people ascribed to the symbol the glorious properties that belonged only to the reality. And doubtless there had been occasions when the symbol and the reality went together. In the wilderness, in the days of Moses, "It came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee" (Num. x. 35). But these were occasions determined by the cloud rising and going before the host, an unmistakable indication of the will of God. (Num. ix. 15-22). Yet even superstitious men believe in a supernatural power. And they believe in the possibility of enlisting that power on their side. And the method they take is to ascribe the virtue of a charm to certain external objects with which that power is associated. The elders of Israel ascribed this virtue to the ark. They never inquired whether the enterprise was agreeable to the mind and will of God. They never asked whether in this case there was any ground for believing that the symbol and the reality would go together. They simply ascribed to the symbol the power of a talisman, and felt secure of victory under its shadow. Would that we could think of this spirit as extinct even in Christian communities? (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Sin the reason of defeat*:—"The elders" hold a kind of council. Where were Eli the judge and Samuel the prophet? Neither had part in this war. The question of the elders was right, inasmuch as it recognised that the Lord had smitten them, but wrong inasmuch as it betrayed that they had not the faintest notion that the reason was their own moral and religious apostasy. They had not learned the A B C of their history, and of the conditions of national prosperity. They stand precisely on the pagan level, believing in a national God, who ought to help his votaries, but from some inexplicable caprice does not; or who, perhaps, is angry at the omission of some ritual observance. What an answer they would have got if Samuel had been there! There ought to have been no need for the question, or, rather, there was need for it; but the answer ought to have been clear to them; their sin was the all-sufficient reason for their defeat. There are plenty of Christians, like these elders, who, when they find themselves beaten by the world and the Devil, puzzle their brains to invent all sorts of reasons for Godsmiting, except the true one—their own departure from Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Reliance on religious symbols*:—"If this hypocrisy, this resting in outward performances, was so odious to God under the law, a religion full of shadows and ceremonies, certainly it will be much more odious under the gospel, a religion of much more simplicity, and exacting so much the more sincerity of heart, even because it disburdens the outward man of the performances of legal rights and observances. And therefore, if we now, under the gospel, shall think to delude God Almighty, as Michal did Saul, with an idol handsomely dressed instead of the true David, we shall one day find that we have not mocked God, but ourselves; and that our portion among hypocrites shall be greater than theirs. (*William Chillingworth.*) *God only for a crisis*:—"Once an old Scotch woman was on board a steamship crossing the Atlantic. She was terribly afraid of storm and wreck. One day the wind and storm began to rise. Immediately she besieged the captain of the steamer with anxious questionings as to danger. At last the captain solemnly said, "Well, madam, I think we shall have to trust in the Lord." "Oh," cried the old lady, "has it come to that?" Such is a by no means uncommon tendency—to push away recognition of dependence upon God to the time of some great and squeezing crisis, and to refuse to remember that in the common calm of every day we are as much and as really dependent upon God. That is not true faith that grasps at God only in a crisis.

Ver. 4. So the people sent to Shiloh.—*Shiloh and its lessons*:—"This subject forms an impressive chapter in the history of Israel. Eli was now the theocratic judge of the Hebrew commonwealth, and its administration centered round Shiloh, where he dwelt and the ark was kept, and its statutes observed. Let us glance at the steps which led to disaster. 1. Family discipline neglected. It is often the case, as true to-day as then, that men are so busy with money-making or important trusts, as to be almost strangers to their own households and ignorant of the habits of their children. 2. Disobedient children. They were careless of religion, but careful of tithes. They helped themselves to as much of

the sacrifices as they wanted, whether the offerer would or no; and as a result men abhorred the offerings of the Lord. Family discipline is too great when children are full grown and their habits strong. 3. Religion slighted. A nation suffers more from the sins of its rulers and priests than from the sins of an equal number of private men who are simply hewers of wood and carriers of water. The sins of the former are fashionable; those of the latter are vulgar and contemptible. 4. Vain confidence. And "all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." But courage is not of the sword and spear and shibboleth, of bow and banner and boasting, neither of the giant frame and muscle; it is of the heart and spirit. It is the unconquerable will, and the heart conscious of right, prodigal of life for its defence, that makes one man able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight. 5. National calamity. It is not religiosity that saves, but spirituality. 6. Providence. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. God will take care of His ark as well as of His people. (*Homiletic Review*.)

Ver. 7. **And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp.**—*Is God in the camp?* :—I. CONSIDER THE GREAT MISTAKE which both Israelites and the Philistines made. The Israelites, instead of seeking to God himself, went to Shiloh to fetch the ark of the covenant. Before they had won any victory, the sight of the ark made them boastful and confident. The Philistines fell into an error of a different kind, for they were frightened without any real cause. They said, "God is come into the camp;" whereas God had not come at all. It was only the ark with the cherubim upon it; God was not there. 1. The mistake they made was just this: they mistook the visible for the invisible. It has pleased God, even in our holy faith, to give us some external symbols—water, and bread, and wine. They are so simple, that it does seem at first sight, as if men could never have made them objects of worship, or used them as instruments of a kind of witchcraft. One would have thought that these symbols would only have been like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle, through which men would behold the Saviour and draw near to Him. Instead thereof, some have neither looked through the windows nor passed through the gates, but they have ascribed to the gates and the windows that which is only to be found in Him who is behind them both. It is sad, indeed, when the symbol takes the place of the Saviour. 2. These Israelites fell into another mistake, which is also often made to-day: they preferred office to character. In their distress, instead of calling upon God, they sent for Hophni and Phinebas. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." The blind man may wear a band on his arm to show that he is a certificated guide; but will you be saved from the ditch simply because he belongs to the order of guides, and has his certificate with him? Be not led away by any such vain notion. 3. But these people who faced the Philistines made another mistake: they confounded enthusiasm with faith. When they saw the ark they shouted so that the earth rang again. "These are the kind of people I like," says one, "people that can shout." If that is all you want, why do you not go among the bulls of Bashan, and make your home in the midst of them? They can make more noise than any mortal man can make. These Israelites shouted, but there was nothing in their noise, any more than there is in their modern imitators. If the ejaculation comes from your heart, I would not ask you to restrain it. God forbid that we should judge any man's worship! But do not be so foolish as to suppose that because there is loud noise there must also be faith. Faith is a still water, it floweth deep. True faith in God may express itself with leaping and with shouting; and it is a happy thing when it does: but it can also sit still before the Lord, and that perhaps is a happier thing still. Praise can sit silent on the lip, and yet be heard in heaven. There is a passion of the heart too deep for words. 4. Another mistake these people made that day was this: they valued novelty above Scriptural order. "The Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore." The Israelites probably made the same mistake, fixing their hope on this new method of fighting the Philistines, which they hoped would bring them victory. We are all so apt to think that the new plan of going to work will be much more effective than those that have become familiar; but it is not so. It is generally a mistake to exchange old lamps for new. "There hath not been such a thing heretofore." There is a

glamour about the novelty which misleads us, and we are liable to think the newer is the truer. If there has not been such a thing heretofore, some people will take to it at once for that very reason. "Oh," says the man who is given to change, "that is the thing for me!" But it is probably not the thing for a true-hearted and intelligent Christian, for if "there hath not been such a thing heretofore," it is difficult to explain, if the thing be a good one, why the Holy Ghost, who has been with the people of God since Pentecost, and who came to lead us into all truth, has not led the Church of God to this before. If your new discovery is the mind of God, where has Holy Scripture been all these centuries? The mistake made on that battle-field is a mistake which nowadays is frequently imitated. It assumes many forms. 5. We fall into their error when we confound ritual and spirituality. 6. We fall into the same blunder that the Israelites and Philistines made if we consider orthodoxy to be salvation. We have secured much that is worth keeping when we have, intellectually and intelligently, laid hold on that divinely-revealed truth, "the gospel of the grace of God" but we have not obtained everything even then. Remember it was a beautiful tomb in which the dead Christ was laid; but he left it, and there was nothing there but grave-clothes after He had gone; and, in like manner, the best-constructed system of theology, if it has not Christ in it, and if he who holds it be not himself spiritually alive, is nothing more than a tomb in which are trappings for the dead. It is nothing better than a gilded ark, without the presence of God; and although you may shout, and say, "God is come into the camp," it will not be so. 7. We fall into the same error if we regard routine as security, and think that, because we have often done a thing, and have not suffered for it, therefore it will be always well with us. We are all such creatures of habit that, at length, our repeated actions seem to be natural and right. Because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. But though Pompeii may slumber long at the foot of Vesuvius, at length it is overwhelmed. It behoves every one of us to try our ways, and specially to call in question things which have become a sort of second nature to us. II. Having considered the great mistake these people made, I will draw your attention, in the second place, to THE GREAT TRUTH of which their mistake was a caricature. God does come to the camp of His people, and His presence is the great power of His church. I will briefly sketch the scene that takes place when God comes into the camp. 1. Then, the truth of the gospel becomes vital. 2. When God comes into the camp, new life is put into prayer. 3. By the presence of God in the camp fresh energy is thrown into service. 4. When God comes into the camp, His presence convinces unbelievers. 5. The presence of God, moreover, comforts mourners. 6. When God is in the camp, His presence infuses daring into faith. Feeble men begin to grow vigorous, young men dream dreams, and old men see visions. Many begin to plot and plan something for Jesus which, in their timid days, they would never have thought of attempting. Others reach a height of consecration that seems to verge on imprudence. 7. The fact of God being in the camp cannot be hidden, for in a delightful way it distils joy into worship. III. Let us try to learn THE GREAT LESSONS which this incident teaches us. 1. The first lesson is that which I have been insisting upon all through: the necessity of the Divine presence. 2. Learn, next, that we should do all we can to obtain the presence of God in the camp. 3. When God does come to us, we should seek by all means to retain his presence. How can this boon be secured? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 10—22. **And the Philistines fought and Israel was smitten.**—*The Harvest of Sin*:—This story tells of a harvest that had long been predicted, and that at length was reaped. "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." See, now, the various harvests that were reaped that day. 1. Israel reaped a great harvest. How did this come about? Not surely because Israel had not enough men with whom to fight! For Gideon, with a much smaller body of men, had once defeated a much larger army than the Philistines had that day. Nor was it because God was not able to maintain the dignity of His own ark. For soon after this, without any army at all, He forced the Philistines to send back the ark—and so plagued them that they were only too thankful to get rid of it. No; Israel reaped defeat that day because for years they had sown disobedience. 2. Hophni and Phinehas reaped a great harvest

that day. Rapacious, licentious, blasphemous; they had profaned holy things, and that for many years current, so that at last they probably thought that God would not act, even if they forgot all decency, and rivalled the heathen in their sins. Because sentence against their evil work was not executed speedily, therefore their heart was fully set in them to do evil (Eccl. 8. 11). So far had they gone, that they in common with Israel forgot that the ark was only a symbol of the Divine presence, and that, if they so acted as to forfeit the real presence of God, no number of arks could save them. Such being the case, no wonder that their fate was what it was. 3. Eli reaped a sad harvest. His fate was by no means as dark as that of his two sons; for he was a godly man, though weak. His heart was right, after all, and he was more anxious for the welfare of the ark than for that of his wicked sons. Still, his fate was sad. Compare his end with that of Joshua, and you will realise what a vast difference there was between the two. One went out in a blaze of glory, while the other was darkened by an eclipse. His sowing in the education of his sons had been very faulty, and he had been duly warned, but in vain. As a result, he too had to reap a harvest of the same kind that he had sown. God's laws are ever the same. Men may think that He has changed, but He has not. Or they may think that He will make an exception in their case; but they are mistaken. God makes no exceptions. Sow to the flesh—reap corruption. Sow to the Spirit—reap everlasting life. This was the law then, and this is the law to-day. (A. F. Schaffler, D.D.)

Ver. 11. **And the Ark of God was taken** (compare Chap. v. 7. and II Sam. vi. 15).—*The ark taken and retaken*:—The whole of this history which gathers round the capture of the ark, and its return to the land of Israel till it found a home in Jerusalem, is of very great interest. I. Let us first, then, look AT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DECLENSION AND DEFEAT. At the root of the calamity which befel the nation and the dishonour to the cause of God, there was a deep moral apostasy. The spiritual condition of the people had never sunk lower, from their abasement in Egypt to their captivity in Babylon, than at this time. The character of the priesthood had become thoroughly corrupt, and this is one of the most ominous signs that can appear in any society. The priests have the heaviest responsibility, no doubt, but sins of priests and people generally go hand in hand. Then, if there is to be recovery at all, convulsion is not far away. Churches and ministers with a very decent exterior may be standing in the same relative position as the people and priesthood in this olden time. We may be as far beneath the Sermon on the Mount as they were beneath the commandments of Sinai. We must never forget that the great test of all religion is its moral results. Is it making men lead higher, purer, more self-denying lives? Is our Christianity presenting itself in the spirit of Christ? Are ministers following the example of the apostle who could truly say, "I seek not yours, but you"? To have Church and land safe, is not enough to be free from the profanations which led to the capture of the ark; we must be in some conformity with the Christian standard. There was another feature of the declension of the people of Israel connected with this. They had changed their religion into a formal superstition. After their first defeat by the Philistines they began to think of higher help. But it was not of God they thought, the living God, but only of His ark. "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant, that it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." And like all men when reality begins to fail, they are great in lofty phrases—"The ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts which dwelleth between the cherubim." When religion comes to this it sinks into a hideous idol, and the petrified shell must be broken in pieces if the spirit is to be saved. It is the natural result of the corruption of the word of life. So it was with the Pharisees in the time of our Lord. They made broad phylacteries with texts on them, and washed cups and plates, and made much of tithing little things, and then religion ascended a cross and hid itself in a grave. How deep it is in human nature to put the letter for the life! And when we take the Bible into our hand and call ourselves evangelical Christians we are not safe from this same danger. It is quite possible to possess an orthodox creed and put it in place of a true, unselfish life, to hold fast by our Bibles, and make the having them and reading them a charm, as truly as the Israelites, with the ark of Shiloh. There comes to the Church of Christ an evangelical revival. But in time it loses its efficacy. The same truth is preached, the very same

words are used, but they have passed into a formula which glides over the tongue of the speaker, and falls on the ears of the hearers without any movement of the heart, or perhaps any distinct significance to the mind. The revival of Christian doctrine will ere long lose its power, unless it lead to a corresponding revival of Christian life. Now, there is a further stage in the ark's history before it reaches its lowest fall. It has been dissociated from the living God, and has become not merely a common but a desecrated thing. To redeem the Israelites from their error, they must learn that the ark is powerless if God forsakes them, and that the symbol cannot save without the living presence. "The Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and the ark of God was taken." Natural human courage proved itself stronger than corrupted religion, and hypocrisy was broken and scattered. No doubt the Philistines imagined they had vanquished Israel's God, and some of his sincere but short-sighted friends thought the cause of religion lost, but the victory was for God and truth. "The corruption of the best thing becomes the worst," and life, in some lower form, rises and overthrows what has lost its spirit, though it may still bear a higher name. We may think that catastrophes like these are very far from our own country, and from the churches of God among us, but there may be a slow decay which brings about the same end. Unless we can raise our Christian life in some measure up to our profession, and make it higher than the natural virtues which are found outside the Church, we shall suffer defeat in point after point, which shall bring on us serious detriment. If, for example, dishonesty and faithlessness to engagements be permitted amongst us, which would not be suffered in the common walks of life, we cannot maintain our place as the guardians of righteousness. If men of science show an unwearied love in the study of nature, an enthusiasm in gathering stores of knowledge from earth and sea and sky, and a skilfulness in applying them to practical use, while we are indifferent and inert in the pursuit of spiritual truths, careless about the hidden treasures of wisdom which cast light on the ways of God and meet the wants of souls, we shall not inspire confidence in our sincerity, or give men much interest in the contents of God's Word and the work of Christ's Church. The world is ready to judge a cause by the spirit it creates and the fruit it produces, and if we do not surround the ark of God with all the things that have virtue and praise of which the apostle speaks, men will not believe in us, and may come to treat it with contempt. II. We come to the other side of the subject, God's victory. The Philistines carry the captive ark in triumph to Ashdod, their capital, and set it up as a trophy in the house of Dagon, their god. But the ark, which could not be defended by great armies, and round which thirty thousand men fell in vain, showed the power of the God of Israel when it was left alone and in exile. Dagon fell prostrate before it, and when the priests set up their idol again it brought on it a heavier ruin. Disease spread through their coasts, and they began to feel that they were in conflict with a mysterious power, though they were slow to admit their weakness. What to do with God is the world's great trial, as what to do with Jesus was the difficulty of Pilate. For the world cannot make God to its mind, and in the end the world cannot do without Him. It carries His ark hither and thither, seeks to bring Him to the level of its own conceptions, to subject Him to its own idols, but finds in all its efforts no true rest till it suffers Him to take His own way to His throne, from which in His own time He shall make good His word by still higher victories—"Over Philistia will I triumph." We are still in the midst of this history, but we have reached a wider phase of it. We see it now more frequently, not in the attempt to put Dagon above the God of heaven, but to put man above Him. This brings us to the last remark, that if the ark of God is to find its true place it must be committed to the hands of men who love it. Men who have no real faith in it may be made instruments in God's Providence of showing its powers, even by their extorted acknowledgments; but if it is to reach its throne it must be set within the border of its own land, and be borne from house to house and village to village till it gains Jerusalem. Even the God of the ark will not carry it to its end without human agency. That cross is our ark of the covenant, and in the joy that welcomed it to Jerusalem, when "David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet," we seem to catch far off the anticipation of that time when "the temple of God shall be opened in heaven, and there is seen in it the ark of His testament: and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The Kingdoms of this world are become

the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi.) And so let us, in closing, gather up the spirit of the history as it applies to ourselves. We need never despair of the cause of God; it has had its defeats where all seemed lost, but every defeat has been the herald of a new victory and of a higher rise. From Shiloh to the house of Dagon; but thence to Jerusalem to put on more spiritual beauty, and to be surrounded with those songs which go deep into Christian hearts. Let us not faint at its many vicissitudes. (*J. Ker, D.D.*) *The Ark of God taken*:—I. THE TEXT EXHIBITS THE TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES TO WHICH UNGODLINESS IN THE CHURCH AND THE WEAK OR SYMPATHETIC TOLERATION OF IT WILL LEAD. No one can fail to perceive that this was a most crushing catastrophe. "The ark of God was taken." Looked at merely as a military reverse it presents a very gloomy aspect. Overwhelming must be the defeat inflicted when it reaches even to the capture of the general's tent or the pavilion over which floats the royal standard; and this was what happened. On some of the sculptured tablets which adorn the walls of the British Museum you may see representations of triumphal processions, in which the gods of the congregated people are being carried into captivity. Something like this happened, I suppose, after this battle of Aphek. With jubilant, and it may be mocking shouts, a procession was formed, and the sacred prize was borne to the temple of their chief idol. To Dagon they owe their success, and Jehovah is now the prisoner of Dagon, and must own the superior Deity. And in this way, of course, their own spiritual nature was injured. The inevitable and irresistible tendency of sin, wherever it exists, is to bring calamity upon the individual, upon the family, upon the nation; but when wickedness lifts up its head in the Church there is, if I may use the expression, a cancer of the heart; the very centre of life and vigour is stricken. "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" If the light that is in the world be darkness, how great is that darkness! And the end of it will be that God's name will be discredited, souls injured most desperately, the Lord's own people plunged in gloom, and the cause of truth and righteousness smitten with a staggering blow, if not covered with disgrace. Hence the folly and guilt of an easy toleration of open sin anywhere, but especially in the Church. The command to leave the tares never means that I am to let alone those who are manifestly thorns and weeds and poisonous herbs. No, no. Persecution, of course, we must not allow, but discipline we dare not neglect. II. The text exhibits THE OUTRAGEOUS FOLLY OF ATTEMPTING TO COMPENSATE FOR THE ABSENCE OF GODLINESS BY SUPERFICIAL EXCITEMENT AND SUPERSTITIOUS ATTENTION TO RELIGIOUS FORMS. 1. It indicates that they had not consulted the Lord before they commenced the campaign. You remember the time when the earlier generations of those redeemed out of Egypt came to the borders of Canaan, and the command was given to go up and possess the land? Spies were sent to explore the country, and they brought back an evil report. The people lost heart and began to murmur bitterly. The Lord in His righteous anger said, "These people shall not go in at all; their children shall go in, but as for them, they shall die in the wilderness." Then their murmuring changed into penitential mourning, and they said, "We will go." Moses retorted, "It is now too late, the Lord will not be with you." Nevertheless they presumed to advance, "but the ark of the covenant of the Lord and Moses moved not out of the camp." It was a superficial, undisciplined, unconsecrated impulse, and it met with defeat. They anticipated Providence. They precipitated an immature crisis and produced abortion. 2. They showed very shallow conceptions in regard to the principles of the kingdom to which they belonged, and the first conditions of success. "Why had the Lord smitten them!" Surely there was little need to ask that. Was not gross iniquity tolerated in high places? Were not the services of the sanctuary steeped in defilement? 3. Their language shows that they were utterly blinded in regard to the true nature of religion, and had no glimmer of that faith in the power of which their fathers had conquered, and which is evermore "the victory that overcometh the world." They said, "Let us take unto us the ark," as if the ark were everything. The grand old war-cry, "Arise, O Lord, Thou and the ark of Thy strength," had become dwarfed and dried up into confidence in what was nothing better than a wooden chest, as if, having that, they had all they needed, or could at least compel God to go with them. There is a tendency of the soul in all ages which may be thus expressed—little religion, much religiousness; little purity, much ritual; indifferent morals, the most polished manners. When people neglect the "weightier matters of the law," all

the more devoutly do they "tithe mint and anise and cummin." Herod cannot atone for Herodianism, by building a splendid temple. You cannot atone for doing a wicked deed, or cherishing a wicked thought, by ejaculating in a parenthesis, "The Lord forgive me." You cannot make up for betraying the cross by bowing to the crucifix. You cannot make up for living sour skim milk, or putrid water, by serving it up in a silver cream-jug. You cannot hide the ghastliness of death by beautifying its shroud, or stay the corruption of Hades by adorning its sepulchre. You cannot cover hypocrisy or avert the consequences of formalism by running to the ark for shelter. III. THE TEXT SHOWS US HOW GOD IN DEFEAT AND DISASTER SOWS THE SEED OF ULTIMATE DELIVERANCE AND VICTORY. "The ark of God was taken." Yes; "but the ark was taken and Hophni and Phinehas were slain"; that is, the material prop upon which they were weakly and vainly leaning was removed, and the main causes of their national deterioration were destroyed. There are some successes which are worse than any defeats. If a builder is raising a house upon a rotten or weak foundation, the higher he is enabled to raise it without a check, the more overwhelming is the collapse which he is preparing in the long run. A student who is relying on luck and succeeding by a cram, has met with a misfortune which might well make him tremble. There are victories which, confirming a false principle and strengthening a vain self-confidence, do but lure the triumphant conqueror forward into the heart of a more tangled mass of difficulties, and land him in a more utter overthrow. God can afford to let His ark be taken; for, although the ark of God be captured, the God of the ark is never outwitted nor overreached. (R. H. Roberts, B.A.) **The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.**—*Clerical warriors*:—It ill becomes the minister of peace to mix in the clang of arms. It was an evil day for Hophni and Phinehas when they took the ark of the covenant from Shiloh, and sought to work on the fanaticism of the people by unveiling the Holiest of all. Unprepared to die, and guilty of profaning holy things, they provoked the judgment which shed their blood. It was an evil day for Zuingle when he left his chaplain's post to wear a helmet, a sword, and a battle-axe: covered with wounds, insulted, killed, he lay under a tree at Cappel—not yet forty-eight years of age, his body cut and burned, and his ashes driven to the winds. "He had wielded an arm that God had forbidden," says the historian; "the helmet had covered his head, and he had grasped the halberd. His more devoted friends were themselves astonished, and exclaimed, 'We knew not what to say—a bishop in arms!'" The bolt had furrowed the cloud, the blow had reached the reformer, and his body was no more than a handful of dust in the palm of a soldier! It was an evil day for Walker—that noble-hearted clergyman, who in the memorable siege of Derry attained such eminence, and did such service to his country by his patriotic and Christian discourses, for which he received the thanks of Parliament, the mitre of a bishop, and a monument in the city where his words and example kept up the courage of his famished fellow-citizens for many weary days—it was an evil day for Walker when he rushed unbidden and unnecessarily to the battle of the Boyne. "He ought to have remembered that the peculiar circumstances which had justified him in becoming a combatant had ceased to exist, and that in a disciplined army, led by generals of long experience and great fame, a fighting divine was likely to give less help than scandal. The bishop-elect was determined to be wherever danger was, and the way in which he exposed himself excited the extreme disgust of his royal patron, who hated a meddler almost as much as a coward. A soldier who ran away from a battle, and a gownsman who pushed himself into a battle, were the two objects which most excited William's spleen. . . . While exhorting the colonists of Ulster to play the man, Walker was shot dead. . . . William thought him a busybody who had been properly punished for running into danger without any call of duty, and expressed that feeling with characteristic bluntness on the field of battle. 'Sire,' said an attendant, 'the Bishop of Derry has been killed by a shot at the ford.' 'What took him there?' growled the king." Godly men may make mistakes, enter suspicious circles, and endanger their sacred calling and their influence for good; but when the wicked rush into sin, and die under the chastisement of God, the calamity involves the ruin of their immortal souls—Ichabod is then written upon their eternity. (R. Steel.) **Eli's death**:—I. THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE GROSSLY WICKED. "And the two sons of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas, were slain." The greed and lust and irreverence of the sons of Eli met with swift punishment. It was no accident which sent them together to their bloody death. So sometimes sudden destruction comes upon the

enemies of God. We may not tell when or how, but its coming is sure. Here or beyond, there shall be a day of righteous retribution. But we do not come to halt the evil of the lives of these wicked priests if we only look at their deaths as the outcome. For they were leaders of the people. No bad man is alone in his destruction. If the final judgment is to be deferred to a one last day, which shall be the end of probation for all, is it not in order that the results of good and evil may be worked out to the end? II. THE IMPLICATION IN EVIL OF THE WEAKLY GOOD. Eli stands out in the gallery of Old Testament characters as the most conspicuous example of weak goodness. Influence is not measured by the correctness or the intensity of the emotions, but by strength and direction of the will. We shall be judged, not by our feelings of sympathy or kindness, but by the deeds which express our earnest purpose. It was here that Eli was lacking. There was just force enough in his convictions to control his emotions; when that was done, their force was spent, and his speech was weak and his conduct wavering. It is not only open sin, positive disobedience, violent breaking of God's law, which comes within the scope of sure retributions. III. THE SAFETY OF GOD'S CAUSE. That the Lord is able to take care of His own cause is no reason why we should be careless of it, or lightly imperil its interests. (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

Ver. 12. **And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.**—*The tidings bringer*:—I. THAT USELESS LAMENTATIONS AFTER THE EVENT CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR WEAKNESS OR MISCONDUCT DURING THE EVENT. It is well to repent with bitter tears over bygone follies, errors, and sins, over opportunities lost or wasted. It is unmanly, however, to waste the present in lamentations over the past, or to imagine that any tears can cause those things that have been done to be undone, or those things that have been left undone to be done. II. THAT THE VENGEANCE OF GOD SOONER OR LATER COMES UPON THE UNWORTHY. Hophni and Phinehas might for a time pursue with impunity their licentious and covetous propensities; but headlong destruction in the end came upon them and theirs. For ill-gotten gains, for ill-gotten power, for ill-gotten pleasures, a day of reckoning will assuredly come. III. THAT PARENTAL PARTIALITY IS NOT SUFFICIENT EXCUSE FOR THE CONNIVANCE AT, OR THE PERPETRATION OF, INJUSTICE. IV. THAT OUTWARD RITUAL, HOWEVER DECENT AND BECOMING IN ITS DUE PLACE, CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR MORAL DEFICIENCIES. V. THAT IN OUR WORDS AND IN OUR ACTIONS WE SHOULD HAVE A DELICATE CONSIDERATION FOR THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS. The messenger mentioned in the text did this in his communication to Eli. To Eli's question to the messenger, he breaks the sad news gradually and gently to the aged priest, rising by successive steps in his narrative from the lesser woes to the greater. VI. THAT OUR ERRORS OFTEN DEPRIVE US OF THE POWER OF ENJOYMENT, BUT LEAVE US THE CAPACITY FOR SUFFERING. VII. THAT WHAT THE SUPERSTITIOUS DENOMINATE PREMONITIONS OF EVIL, ARE REALLY OFTENTIMES ONLY THE PRICKINGS OF THEIR OWN CONSCIENCES. "Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God." (*R. Young, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. **For his heart trembled for the ark of God.**—*On solicitude for the prosperity of religion*:—I. THAT A GOOD MAN WILL ALWAYS FEEL CONCERNED FOR THE SAFETY, HONOUR, AND ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION. In the success of the Gospel, are involved the pleasure and glory of God. The good man considers it as an august display of the Divine perfections, as dear to the eternal mind in its design and accomplishment, and as vouchsafed to men in great mercy and trust. As a creature, therefore, of the Most High God, he will feel concerned for the prosperity of a work upon which, from before the foundation of the world, his Creator hath bestowed His care, and the success of which He earnestly desires, and hath sent His Son to promote. As a philanthropist, therefore, he will feel interested in the safety of this ark of mercy, before which the penitent may find forgiveness, and the sorrowful and the dying be cheered with soothing consolations and animating hopes. As a patriot, he considers religion essential to the stability, happiness and prosperity of the state. He contrasts with the rude schemes of polytheism and idolatry, which ancient legislators rendered sacred in the state, the pure, the rational, the consoling theology of the Gospel: and his love for his country will lead him to promote such an extension of the knowledge of Christianity, and such an attachment to its doctrines and worship, as may preserve it from being taken away. When he considers the value of this religion to himself;

that it is the guide of his youth, the comfort of his age, his joy in prosperity, his solace in adversity, gratitude to its Author will make him a faithful guardian of the treasure, with which he is entrusted. In short, when he compares the objects which religion proposes, with aught else of high estimation, and ardent pursuit, he perceives that without these a man may possess all other things and be wretched; and that with these, the humblest of the sons of men may be resigned and happy. But hath not the Author and head of the Christian covenant said that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?" He hath. And though, for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, it may be appointed to many trials, and often enveloped in apparent dangers, nothing shall destroy it. But while man continues as he is, proud, corrupt, it cannot be otherwise than that the religion of our Redeemer should have its adversaries, and be sometimes exposed by its friends. These considerations will beget in the bosom of the good man a constant care for its reputation and prosperity. Not noisy and hollow will his concern for the ark of God be, but sincere and deep as Eli's proved. Mark his solicitude when he inquires. "What is there done, my son?" Sublime piety! Wonderful instance of hallowed sensibility! II. But from admiring the concern of Eli for the ark that was in Shiloh, let us be led to CONSIDER IN WHAT WAYS WE MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE REPUTATION AND PROSPERITY OF THE ARK OF THE BETTER COVENANT, "the Gospel of our salvation." 1. In the first place we should not disguise our belief in the religion of our Lord. Too easily does pride, a dread of the ridicule of the profane, or a coincidence with the current of the world's opinions, deter the disciples of the Redeemer from avowing their attachment to Him. Would we advance the interests of our Saviour's kingdom? Let us be seen in the ranks of His friends, and, as an inspired Apostle exhorts, "Go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." 2. We may promote both the honour and prosperity of our religion by upholding its institutions and observing devoutly its sacred rites. 3. You may contribute to the safety and honour of the ark of God, by instructing your offspring in its origin, its value, and its uses, and training them up to respect and defend it. 4. We may contribute to the success of Christianity by thwarting the course of its adversaries, and counteracting the poisons prepared against it. There are books, the vehicles of impious sophistry, of debased wit, and of blasphemous philosophy. From the contagion which these diffuse the good man will endeavour to preserve his household and to suppress their reputation and influence. 5. By his personal exertions for the advancement of those arrangements which are necessary to give stability and respectability to the institutions of religion in any place, every Christian may promote the honour and influence of Christianity among men. (*Bishop Dehon.*) *Eli—his heart trembled for the ark of God:—*The key to Eli's character is in these simple words: "His heart trembled for the ark of God." He was a good man, but timid; faithful, but fearful; with much love in his heart to God and the ark of God, but with little strength of mind or firmness and decision of purpose. His conduct at this crisis may be contrasted with that of Moses on a similar occasion. When the Israelites, discouraged by the report of the spies, refused to go up and take possession of the promised land, and were condemned, in consequence, to wander for forty years in the wilderness—stung with remorse, they resolved hastily to repair their fatal fault: "They rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned." Moses strenuously opposed their resolution. He peremptorily refused either to lead them himself, or to let the ark of God go with them: "They presumed to go up unto the hill-top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp." The issue of the engagement was disastrous to the Israelites. Eli is placed in circumstances not unlike those in which Moses acted so nobly. Evidently he has misgivings as to the step about to be taken; and well he may, considering all things. A heavy cloud of judgment overhangs himself and his household. If the ark is to accompany the army, it must be under the custody of his sons. Are they fit keepers of it, vile as they have made themselves, and doomed to perish miserably? Eli may well hesitate; and, when the message from the army reaches him, it must cause him deep distress. The elders and people are importunate. The old man does not resist, though in the very act of yielding his mind misgives him, and his heart cannot but tremble for the ark of God. He is a godly man, and as kind as he is godly. The brief notices of his connection with Samuel are singularly affecting. I. ELI'S DEFICIENCY COMES SADLY OUT IN ALL THE RELATIONS WHICH HE HAS TO SUSTAIN AS A RULER—IN THE STATE, IN

THE CHURCH, AND IN THE FAMILY. 1. Eli was head of the State. He was a judge in Israel. As a judge, in his capacity of civil governor, Eli saw the affairs of the Jewish commonwealth brought to the lowest ebb of fortune. It is true that little or nothing is recorded of his administration; but in the last act of it, the war waged with the Philistines, and in the way in which that war is conducted, we see indications of imbecility not to be mistaken. (1 Sam. iv.) There is an evident want of due consideration and concert. The sudden expedient, the desperate after-thought, of summoning the ark to help in retrieving the disaster, only brings out more sadly the absence of all sound and godly counsel in the whole affair at the first; and the conduct of Eli is throughout that of a habitual waverer. One thing is clear—as a ruler he left the State on the very brink of ruin. 2. As high priest, set over the affairs of the House of God, he lets his weakness still more shamefully get the better of him. The scandalous outrages and excesses committed by his two sons when they were associated with him in the priesthood never could have taken place had “things been done decently and in order.” This laxity Eli must have tolerated; at least he wanted firmness to repress it (1 Sam. ii. 12-17). We are forced to conclude that in his capacity of priest, as well as in that of judge, he was the victim of indecision and imbecility. 3. But it is as a parent that he chiefly shows his weakness; and it is in that character that he is especially reproved and judged. Ah! he forgets that he is invested with parental authority—authority, in his case, backed and seconded by all the powers of law and all the terrors of religion. Nay, it is not so much that he forgets this as that he has not nerve to act upon the recollection of it. It is not really parental love, according to any right view of that pure affection, but self-love at bottom that Eli indulges, and self-love in one of its least respectable forms. It is himself that Eli is unwilling to mortify, not his sons. It is to himself that he is tender, not to them. And when it is considered that his selfish feebleness and fondness show themselves in his neglect of parental discipline even in matters in which the Divine honour is immediately concerned, it is not too much to say that he is preferring his children to his God. Even God’s highest honour must give place to the indulgence of his fond and feeble dotage. And the issue is that “the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged for ever.” It is an issue, as to all the parties concerned, sufficiently disastrous. Of the utter ruin of Eli’s household we need not speak. The priesthood passes away from his family; the government is upon other shoulders; his seed are a beggared race. And all this in connection with one of the meekest and holiest of the saints of God! It is a terrible lesson. And, in keeping with it, is the lesson taught by the melancholy notice of his own decease. The messenger of evil delivered his tidings; and his bearer could stand the accumulation of horrors—Israel fled before the Philistines—a great slaughter among the people—ay, and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, dead also. But when the crowning calamity hurst upon him—“the ark of God is taken”—Eli could bear up no longer. Such was the end of so protracted a life; thus miserably died this man of God. II. Many PRACTICAL REMARKS suggest themselves in connection with the painful history which we have been considering—remarks applicable to parents and members of families, to individual Christians, to the ungodly, and to all. 1. It is a most emphatic warning that the fate of Eli gives to parents; and not to parents only, but to all who have influence or authority of any sort in families. 2. Let individual Christians ponder the lesson of Eli’s character. Much, very much, there is in it to be admired and imitated. But his defects—or, let us say at once, his sins—are recorded for our especial warning. 3. Let the ungodly tremble. Let them look on, and see how God deals with sin in His own people. Does He spare sin in them? Does He spare them in their sins? Behold the severity of God in His treatment of the good and gracious Eli, and tremble at the thought of what may be His treatment of you! “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?” 4. And, finally, let all lay to heart the irrevocable decree and determination of God that sin shall not pass unpunished; let them look and see the end of the ungodly, while they stand in awe at the chastisement of the just. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*) *Eli trembling for the ark of God*:—And was there nothing else, for which the old man’s heart might have trembled? Had he no friends of his own, no relations gone to the war? Yet, indeed, Eli had other causes for trembling. It was his own nation, the nation over which he presided as high priest and judge, which was now engaged in conflict with deadly enemies. Yet “his heart trembled for the ark of God,” as though there had been nothing else to excite his solicitude. We know not whether

Eli were consulted on this perilous scheme of the removal of the ark. Probably not; but, if he were, he could have made but a fruitless opposition. Hophni and Phinehas were, perhaps, not indisposed to the plan; the camp may have been more agreeable than the tabernacle, to men of their dissolute habits. At all events they accompanied the ark. And now was Eli left desolate and alone. Bitter must have been his reflections, and dark his forebodings. Though his sons must die, they might first be brought to repentance for their sins. "Oh, for a new opportunity of repairing his own fault, and entreating them to prepare for the threatened visitation." But they are separated from him; there are in a scene, moreover, of danger. Oh! how his heart must have throbbed for his children! That he fondly loved them, we may be certain. He cannot tarry in his house; he is too restless, too anxious for that. Feeble as he is, he will yet totter forth to the road along which the messenger must pass, and there will he sit watching hour after hour for tidings. But we must connect our text with the subsequent parts of the history if we would justly appreciate the devotedness of Eli to the ark of the Lord. He sat not by the way-side in vain. Now we may believe that there were various feelings at work in Eli's breast, producing this intense anxiety as to the ark of the Lord. As a patriot, for example, he was deeply interested in the fate of the ark; forasmuch as if God suffered this to fall into the hands of the Philistines, it would necessarily indicate His being displeased with His own people, so as almost to have determined on withdrawing from them His protection. As a parent, also, it concerned him greatly to know what had become of the ark; for since the ark was in the special care of his sons it could hardly be in danger, and they continue safe. So that it might have been that his heart, trembling for the ark of God, indicated only that variety of emotion which one so circumstanced might have been expected to feel. But the account of Eli's death, which we have just been considering, proves that his anxiety as to the ark was altogether a separate anxiety; not the combination of solitudes from this source and that, but purely his solicitude, as a faithful servant of God, at that being endangered, over which God had ordained him to watch. His trembling for the ark did but show how jealous Eli was for the glory of God, how intent on promoting that glory, how fearful of any thing which might impair it. Here, then, it becomes us, if we would draw a practical lesson from what is narrated of Eli, to enter a little more at length into the consideration of what it is to take the glory of God for our end. You often read in Scripture of giving glory to God, or of promoting God's glory, as though the glory of the Almighty were that which might be increased or diminished according to contributions received from His creatures. Here, then, we shall be able to define, with sufficient precision, what it is to do anything, as St. Paul requires us to do everything, to the glory of God. "Seeing," says Bishop Beveridge, "that 'the glory of God' is nothing else but the manifestation of Himself and His perfections in the world, hence it necessarily follows that he who doth anything for that end and purpose, that God and His perfections may be better manifested in the world, may be truly said to do it 'for the glory of God.' When a man doth anything whereby the goodness, the wisdom, the power, the mercy, or any of the properties of the most high God is made more manifest and evident in the eyes of men than otherwise it would be, so that they may see and admire Him, such an one glorifies God." Is there anything unreasonable in such a precept? Does it exact more than we can be expected to render? Nay, surely as the creatures of God, it may justly be required of us -- at we act for God; His we are, and Him, therefore, we are bound to serve. But if you cannot accuse the precept of unreasonableness, what way have you made towards weaving it into your practice? Tell us, ye merchants, ye lawyers, ye tradesmen, in what degree do ye propose to yourselves the "glory of God," as the end of your respective transactions? Ye may take as your end the so living and acting as thereby to evidence that the God whom you serve is a glorious God, glorious in His holiness, glorious in His hatred of evil, glorious in His love for "whatsoever things are honest and of good report;" and this is "doing all things to the glory of God." There is no greater practical evil than the endeavour to put religion out of your daily occupations. Tremble the heart may for other things; but its deep, its thrilling apprehension must be for the ark of the living God. Is not that ark even now in peril? Is there no battle going forward between Israel and the Philistine? When has the battle ceased? And many a watcher sits, like Eli, "by the way-side." There is the greatest eagerness for tidings from the camp. But what tremble they for? Oh! the mere politician will tremble at news of foreign pre-

paration for war, or domestic insurrection; and the mere merchant will tremble at declining prices and falling stocks; and parents will tremble for the safety of children, and children for the safety of parents. But what is the chief anxiety, the uttermost solicitude? Is it for God and His cause, as with Eli it was life to know the ark safe, and death to know it in the hands of the foe? Alas! notwithstanding that there is so much profession, we can find few companions for Eli in his faithful watching by the wayside. Now, in the last place, there will probably still be a feeling amongst many of us, as though it were something beyond the ordinary reach—this making the Divine glory the chief end of our actions. And we freely confess that if it were required of us, in every particular action of our lives, that we should be thinking of and aiming at the glory of God, our thoughts would be so continually taken up with the end that we should not have time for the means of effecting it; we might fail in doing our duty, through excessive intentness on the object for which it should be done. But this objection to the scriptural command, that we should "do all things to the glory of God," is akin to the objections to other general commands, such as that we "pray without ceasing." It would be impossible to obey such a command, but by the neglect of other duties, if the prayer "without ceasing" be literally understood, so that there should never be cessation from specific acts of devotion. But he may justly be said to "pray without ceasing," whose habitual frame or temper of mind is devotional, though he is not always engaged in distinct acts of prayer. He may be said to "do all for the glory of God," who makes it the main scope and business of life to promote the Divine honour; though he may not, in each individual proceeding, take account of this end, or place it prominently in view. Our great fear for numbers, who make a good profession of religion is, that after all they may be living for themselves. They have their own end; their actions centre in themselves; they make themselves their object; they aim at themselves in all they do, their own reputation, their own honour, their own interest. They "tremble," but it is for their own safety, and not for that of "the ark of the Lord." It is not, then, an idle and a fine-drawn distinction—that between living to ourselves and living to God. It is what we must all determine, after which we must all strive, if we would make good our Christian profession, to attain more and more the making of God's glory the chief end of our actions. We shall not be losers, we must be gainers—gainers here and hereafter—by living to forget ourselves, to sink ourselves so that God may be magnified in and through us. Would, then, that with Eli, we might "sit by the way-side watching, our hearts trembling for the ark of the Lord." It were a noble thing that the dying Christian, worn down with age and infirmity—and what is he but a way-side watcher, expecting a message from the invisible world?—it were a noble thing, a mighty pledge of his eternal glory, that his last solicitude should be for the ark of the Lord. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Eli trembling for the ark of God:—I. WHY WAS THE ARK SO ENDEARED TO THE FAITHFUL IN ISRAEL?* Not on account of any costliness of its own. It was but a simple box of wood; it had not jewels and precious stones to bespangle it; there was only on its surface a simple lid of gold, upon which were raised two graven cherubim of the same metal; and between the wings of these, and over above these, there was a mystic light, which told that Jehovah was specially and manifestly present there. It could not therefore be anything in the mere structure of the ark that made it so dear. If we open its sacred lid we find beneath it these marvellous contents: the rod of Aaron, that budded; the pot of manna, the angels' food, which fed the people of God in the wilderness; and above all, the two tables of stone, His covenant with His people. But more than this: the golden lid which covered in these mystic contents was itself designated the mercy-seat; upon it was yearly, on the great day of atonement, sprinkled the hallowed blood of the appointed victims; and from that wondrous seat of His grace and glory the Most High gave His answers to His priests, and through them to the people. It was, therefore, the mystic meaning of the ark; the precious treasures the ark enfolded; the wondrous purpose the ark served; the grace emblemized; the fatherly presence of God, glorious in holiness, but tender in compassion towards all that sought Him in sincerity by the "new and living way," which was then intimated and which should afterwards be fully revealed;—it was these things which made the ark the special treasure, the peculiar glory, the heart, the life, the all of Israel. II. HAVE WE, THEN, AUGHT THAT ANSWERS TO THE ARK? Have we, then, a treasure that should be more precious to us than was even the ark of the testimony to the faithful Israelites? We have. The ark was the shadow; to us

belongs the substance. Yea, we have, therefore, in the precious Gospel of Christ all that the ark signified; and that no more in dimness and in gloom, but in noon-day splendour. What know we of God as "in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them?" What know we of Christ, "Emmanuel, God with us," "the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world?" What know we of the wondrous way of access to God thus thrown wide through the veil, that is to say, His flesh? And, therefore, it is this precious Gospel that is the ark of the Church of Christ; it is this precious Gospel in the midst of us that is the living sign and symbol of God's abiding presence with His faithful; and the shechinah, which has beamed in the tabernacle, and sparkled in the temple, has no glory, in comparison with the pure simple Gospel. If, then, the shadow, the type, the harbinger, was so precious to Israel of old, how much more precious to us should be the substance, the antitype, the glorious reality. This, therefore, is the ark of the Christian Church; and how dear it was to the holiest and the best of every age. Let one speak for many. "What things were gain to me," said the glowing Paul, "those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." III. HAVE WE, THEN, EVER REASON TO "TREMBLE FOR THE ARK OF GOD," as trembled the heart of the faithful Israelite, when it went forth to the battlesfield, where the uncircumscribed fought with Israel? We have. If the ark could be withdrawn from any spot, and return no more, may not the Gospel be withdrawn from us, and return no more? It has been withdrawn from many a scene, where once it reigned, in purity and in power. Look at Ephesus, and Laodicea, and Thyatira, and Sardis: where is the bright lamp, which once filled them with beauty and gladness? And what is there in our own favoured land that should hinder the withdrawal of the lamp of life from our shores? There is much reason why we should often "tremble for the ark of God." The dearer anything is to us the more we should tremble, lest we should lose it; the dearer the Gospel the more we have to be taken away from us. Will any man say—"If once I have the Gospel in my heart who shall take it from me?" IV. BUT ARE THERE, THEN, SPECIAL REASONS WHY WE SHOULD "TREMBLE FOR THE ARK OF GOD" AMONG US AT THE PRESENT JUNCTURE IN OUR NATIONAL HISTORY? We can conceive that there are. It was at a special season that the venerable priest trembled for the ark: it was when it had been carried into the field of battle; it was when he knew that it was in imminent danger. Christian brethren, it is not the might, or the mustering of all the foes of the Gospel of Christ; it is not the strength, or the combination of all that have ill-will to his Zion; it is not that "Geba, Ammon, Amalek, and Assur also, have holpen the children of Lot," to war against His truth: but if we could but say, as the holy Hezekiah said, "They be more that are with us than with them; for with them is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles," then should we indeed stay ourselves in these precious words, "The Lord being our light and our salvation, whom should we fear? the Lord being the strength of our life, of whom should we be afraid?" God being for us, who could be against us? But our apprehension arises from within, rather than from without—from ourselves rather than from our adversaries. In the days of old, when our reformed faith came forth in its precious freshness and beauty—when the Gospel was as dear to the people as deliverance to the prisoner: in those days, whatever combination of might was against the Gospel of Christ, the faithful had little or nothing to fear. It is not from without, then, that we apprehend danger; it is far more from within that we apprehend it. We apprehend it because there has come over us a fearful want of a holy confession of the Gospel, and a holy protest against the perversion of the Gospel, which so actuated our martyred forefathers that it seemed to them but one feeling—to love the Gospel more than life, and to hate the error, which marred, and mutilated, and destroyed the Gospel, more than death. Nor is it only this: the laxity and the latitudinarianism which have come over us are worse than this, for there is no stopping on the inclined plane of error. First, men become secure, then indifferent to the truth, then open to error; they are then gradually drawn to choose it, and to love it, and are at last led blindfold by it, at its will. Is there not cause, then, that we should "tremble for the ark of God?" May not God take the vineyard away from us, and give it to other husbandmen, who shall give Him the fruit in due season? But more than this: Is there not a cause, because of the too light esteem, and the too feeble faith, and the too cold zeal, which even those who know somewhat of its preciousness, and

have somewhat of its blessings in their own souls, manifest towards the ark of God? Where is the self-denial? where is the freedom and largeness of sacrifice, for the service of God? But if we go from men of low degree to men of high degree what meets us there? We speak not of one administration, or of another administration; we speak not of rulers and dignitaries, as such; we give them the deepest respect, but we speak of the general tone of moral legislature, and of moral government, in our once protestant England; and none can gainsay us in stating that all have been unfavourable to the national maintenance of the simple Gospel. Shall not God visit for these things, and will not His soul be avenged on a nation like this? Suffer the word of personal and practical application. Is this ark of the covenant, this glorious Gospel of the blessed God, dearer to us than any thing in the whole world besides? Has God opened the eyes of our understanding, to discern its worth? (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *Eli trembling for the ark*:—And what was this ark? In itself, it was nothing more than a chest of wood about five feet long, and half as deep and wide; but of all the holy things the Jews possessed it was the holiest. The names applied to it will show us why. It is called in this chapter “the ark of the covenant of God.” It is called also elsewhere “the ark of the testimony.” By the writings contained in it, it testified or bore witness to the people of what the Lord required of them. And there was another name applied to it—“the ark of God’s strength.” “Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest,” says David, “thou and the ark of thy strength;” and so also he says in another psalm, with a reference to this very transaction, “He delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy’s hand.” And why these lofty names for a thing so mean? For this reason. On the top of this ark stood what was called the mercy-seat. Here He manifested Himself as really present with His people. The ark was the ark of His strength, because here He abode in His strength, and was seen to do so; He discovered on it and by it His greatness and glory. No wonder, then, that it was esteemed sacred. While it was with them, they felt that the Lord God of their fathers was with them, that they might fly to Him when they pleased for protection and look to Him for blessings. And we, too, in the Christian church have our ark. This holy thing, you perceive, corresponded almost exactly, in the purposes to be answered by it, with Christ’s holy gospel. That gospel is a setting forth of His covenant with His spiritual Israel; it is a faithful testimony of all the wonderful things He has done and intends to do for them; it is an unveiling of His presence among them, of His love towards them, and, at the same time, of His greatness and glory. I. THE SERVANTS OF GOD SOMETIMES TREMBLE FOR THE ARK OF GOD. If we ask how this comes to pass I answer:—1. From the great love they have for it. Value a thing highly, and you will sit, as it were, by the way-side watching it; you will be anxious about it, or be tempted to be so; you will be afraid of losing it. What makes the tender mother fear for the infant that is out of her sight, or that seems in danger? Simply this—she loves her infant. And the people of God love the gospel, really, deeply; better than they love any one earthly thing. There sits Eli outside the gate of Shiloh, watching and trembling, and for what? for the life of his sons or the success of the army? Both these are in jeopardy, and he knows they are in jeopardy, but he is not trembling for them; he is afraid for the ark of God. Does this seem to any of you extravagant or unnatural? It would not, if you were really the people of God. “Lord, make Thy gospel dearer to me than all the world.” 2. But there is another reason why the people of God sometimes tremble for the ark—they know something of its value to the people that possess it. He thought of the mercies that holy thing had brought with it for more than four hundred years to his nation. It was the safeguard of Israel, it was the charter of her privileges, it was the token and pledge of the Lord’s special favour towards her; and therefore, when it was in danger, he trembled. And ask the Christian why he is so anxious for the gospel to be here or there. He does not always say, “Because I love the gospel, and wish it to be everywhere;” but rather, “There are many whom I love in that place, and they all need the gospel.” The man has a feeling heart. “It is the greatest treasure our poor bankrupt world has left, the only treasure. It is our life-boat, our last plank, in our dismal wreck. I know its value, and therefore I tremble for it.” 3. A consciousness of guilt also will make the servants of God thus fearful. We have just been looking at the Christian as a man of a benevolent heart; we must regard him now as a man of a tender conscience. Some of you never fear for the Gospel. You never dream of its being taken away from you, or of any spiritual privilege being withdrawn. And

we can tell at once who you are. You are men who do not know yourselves. You do not feel how unworthy you are of your spiritual mercies. But the real Christian is a man who carries about with him a heart that God has wounded. He feels every day he lives that he is a guilty sinner. "If the ark goes from us, it has been driven away from us by my unprofitable and unholy life." O that we could at this hour hear such language as this from every man in our church! We blame others, and they may be worthy of blame, but it would become us better to blame ourselves.

II. THE SERVANTS OF GOD HAVE SOMETIMES REASON TO FEAR FOR THE ARK OF GOD. Not only do they fear for it, as we have just seen; their fear, as we have now to see, may be well founded and right. Some of you may ask how this can be. "The great God," you may say, "will take care of His own glory in our world. Why should we be anxious for it?" I answer, God will indeed take care of His glory here, and of His ark and church also. He is able to do so, and He is pledged and determined to do so. He will ever have a people to praise Him on the earth. But we must remember that though the Gospel will never be removed from the world, yet it may be removed from this or that part of the world. It is not entailed on any congregation, or parish, or kingdom. And this also must be considered—the Gospel has often been removed from one place to another. The ark not only may be lost to a people, it has been lost.

III. THE SERVANTS OF GOD HAVE REASON TO TREMBLE FOR THE ARK OF GOD WHEN IT IS EITHER PROFANED OR TRUSTED IN. In this case it was both.

1. The people profaned the ark. Who bade them send to Shiloh for it, and take it from its holy secrecy there into the tumult of a camp? The Lord had commanded Moses that it should be kept in "the secret place of his tabernacle;" but now to answer their earthly purposes, the command of God is to be set aside, the sacredness of the holy of holies to be violated, a battle-field to become the dwelling-place of the ark of God. If, therefore, a time should ever come in England when our people or rulers shall care less for the Gospel than they care for their own glory or power; let such a time come, and then there will indeed be cause to tremble for the ark of God. It is under-valued, it is profaned, and God will not bear this—it is in danger of being lost.

2. The Israelites also made too much of the ark; they trusted in it, and this at the very time that they under-valued and profaned it—a strange inconsistency, but yet a common one. God was dishonoured by having His ark put in His place, and therefore He dishonoured it and the men who so exalted it. There lie the people of the Lord in slaughtered thousands, and there goes the ark itself, that sacred thing which none but a Levite must ever touch—it is carried by heathen hands amid heathen shouts to a heathen temple; it is lost to the Israel of God. The inference we are to draw is plain—while we do not undervalue our spiritual privileges, we must never trust to them to protect us; nay, we must not expect them to protect even themselves. It is a great mistake to say, "The church and the Gospel will defend themselves." There is the ark in Dagon's temple, and if we conclude, because we have a spiritual church and a preached Gospel that that church must stand and that Gospel still be preached, God may teach us a terrible lesson. He will deliver once more "His strength into captivity and His glory into the enemy's hand." It is the church itself, that is generally the Church's worst foe. If she falls, it will be her own worldly-mindedness and spiritual idolatry, her confidence in herself and her forgetfulness of God, that will bring her low. She will fall her own destroyer. (C. Bradley, M.A.)

Eli trembling for the ark of the Lord:—1. We conceive that one reason why the heart of Eli trembled for the ark of the Lord at that moment, placed amid the din of battle and the onset of conflicting powers, arose from his vivid recollection of the sins of himself and his house. Sin makes cowards of the most courageous. Especially do our sins make us fear the worst, when some object of our affection is placed in jeopardy. On the present occasion Eli recollected his own indifference to the cause with which the ark was associated—his not restraining his sons when they made themselves vile.

2. Eli's heart trembled for the ark because of the vast deliverances it had, under God, achieved for his country. It blessed by its presence the house of Obed-Edom—it overturned the walls of Jericho—it dashed from its strong pedestal the statue of Dagon—it opened a pathway through the Jordan's bosom, and smote by its presence the most powerful armies of the aliens. Has the Protestant Church done less for us?

3. Eli trembled for the safety of the ark from his conviction, that it alone was the real cause of the prosperity and glory of his country. It was the standing memorial of the presence of Jehovah.

4. We may conceive that the associations with which

the ark was connected in the mind of the aged priest made his heart most anxious about its safety. 5. The next reason we shall specify why Eli's heart trembled for the ark of the Lord was the intense affection which he felt towards it. (1) The inveteracy of the hatred entertained by the Church of Rome toward our Protestant ark is one great cause of fear. (2.) Another cause for this trepidation—and one of the most painful—is found in the treachery of them, from whom identity of cause and past favours led us to anticipate very different conduct. (3.) The last cause of trembling I shall specify is the want of the Spirit, and the habit of fervent and united prayer. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *Solicitude for religion*:—I SOME REASONS WHY THE CAUSE OF RELIGION SHOULD BE VERY DEAR TO US, in other words, why we should care for the ark of God. 1. Because the cause of religion ensures the chief elements in the welfare of men. Eli was a patriot. He felt the loss of the ark would mean sorrow and shame to the family, the loss of glory to the village, the rushing, like sudden night, of ruin on the nation. 2. Because the cause of religion is identified with the glory of God. As a creature in the work of the Creator, a loyal subject in the designs of his Sovereign, a filial child in the purposes of his father, a good man is interested in the religion God has given to man. II. SOME CONSIDERATIONS THAT SHOULD FILL US WITH ANXIETY ABOUT THE CAUSE OF RELIGION IN OUR MIDST, in other words, which shall make our hearts tremble for the ark of God. We may urgently inquire about religion in England, as Eli did about the ark, "What is there done, my son?" The reply will tell of: 1. Antagonism. Intellectual, moral. 2. Neglect. Recent census of church-goers reveals appalling indifferentism. 3. Disloyalty. III. SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH WE MAY PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF RELIGION, in other words, do our part to ensure the safety and progress of the ark of God. 1. Never conceal your belief in religion. Opposition is blatant and noisy, shall not allegiance be distinct and pronounced. 2. Uphold the institutions and observe the rites of religion. 3. Diffuse its knowledge and extend its influence by example, prayer, gifts, work. Old Eli, blind and feeble, sat by the wayside waiting for news of the ark, who of us will be content to be found in such a posture of feebleness and ignorance about the progress of religion? (*Homilist.*) *Eli—A godly man trembling for the Ark of God*:—1. THE MIXED AND MOTLEY CHARACTER, THE VERY MISCELLANEOUS COMPOSITION, OF THE ARMY IN WHOSE HANDS THE ARK OF GOD SEEMS TO BE PLACED, MAY WELL CAUSE THE HEART OF AN ELI TO TREMBLE. 1. In the first place, there are those whose mere bodily presence is all that can be reckoned on—the lukewarm and indifferent—the treacherous and false—the men who have joined the standard on compulsion, or in the crowd, or to serve a purpose—disguised spies and traitors in the enemy's interests, or soldiers of fortune, fighting every one for himself. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?" "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." They shall be all volunteers—no pressed men among them. "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart." It is no strife this for mere hireling mercenaries; or for reluctant recruits, enlisted in a fit of temporary excitement. Oh, how does our heart tremble for the ark of the Lord, when we see so many lightly taking upon them the Christian name, and making the Christian profession with little of anything like an adequate and serious sense of what so solemn a pledge implies. Is it any wonder, then, that the cause of God languishes. 2. But, secondly, there are those in the camp who are not thus insincere and false—who are, nevertheless, disabled and enfeebled by some rankling inward wound, some corroding grief, some sad sense of insecurity, or of a doubtful right to be themselves there, and to have the ark among them. On the occasion before us, the Israelites had just been smitten in a previous battle with the Philistines; and it was as defeated men that they were about to take the field again. The ark, indeed, is with us; but in what spirit has it been sent for, and in what spirit received? If it be right to take it down with us into the second battle, it must have been wrong to go without it to the first. By thus seeking to have God in the midst of us now, we confess that He was not in the midst of us before, and that it was in our own strength that we fought. Have we repented of our sin? If not, with all the security which the ark of God is fitted and designed to give—ay, and that multiplied a hundredfold—can we dare to hope for a better issue in the enterprise which we are about to undertake to-morrow? Is there anything analogous to this state of feeling among us?—Let us inquire with reference not only to our standing as individual believers, but to the congregation with which we are associated, the

community to which we belong, and the Church of Christ generally. Let us consult first and principally our own personal experience. We have failed, perhaps, hitherto once, or it may be more than once, in maintaining the Lord's cause, and resisting the enemies of our peace. Are our consciences thus laden with the sense of recent backsliding? Have we to confess that we are in the position of beaten men in Christ's warfare, or of men who have given way? And are we engaging in any holy service—coming, let us say, to the Lord's table—in something of the same spirit in which the Israelites sent for the Lord's ark. The unanswered question, "Wherefore did the Lord smite us before the Philistines?" stands ominously out as a barrier against our complete enlargement, confidence, and security. But why, let us ask again, why is it still an unanswered question? Even now the Lord is ready to answer it. Even now He will search and try us. Thus repenting and doing our first works, returning anew to God, and embracing anew His promises of full and free reconciliation, by all means let us send for the ark; by all means let us come to the sacrament; it will do us good now. No matter for our past defeat—we shall be more than conquerors now. For who can shut his eyes to the fact, that even since the Lord began to deal with us, and with the Church, as in these last years He has been dealing, there has been too much of human boasting and human confidence—too much noise and shouting? 3. Once more, in the third place, let us take yet another, and that the most favourable view of the parties in whose hands the ark has come to be placed. Let us suppose them to be neither hypocrites and mere formalists on the one hand, nor backsliders and men of doubtful position on the other. Let them be men of truest conscience and tenderest walk before God in Christ. Still, compassed about as they are with manifold infirmities, and liable to err and stumble at every step they take—how shall they carry the precious burden safe along the rough road. For it is a delicate and tender, as well as a costly deposit that is committed to their charge, easily susceptible of injury—apt to be soiled and tarnished if the dust of earth reach it, or the very wind of heaven be suffered to visit it too roughly. The essential holiness of God—do we rightly apprehend what it is? And have we any adequate impression of that holiness as imparted and communicated to whatever is His? Ah! if indeed you are a believer in Jesus, consider how much of what is God's you carry about with you wherever you go!—your body and your spirit, which are His,—your character and reputation, which are His,—your talents, which are His,—your very life, which is now altogether His! Let me put myself now for an instant in the position of an onlooker or watcher, like the aged Eli; and what might be my thoughts, as I gaze, not on the faithless or the faltering part of the Lord's army, but on His true and earnest adherents? Do I see any living for themselves alone—caring for their own souls—apparently finding food and refreshment in ordinances, and striving to have a close walk with God—while there is yet no sign of their taking any special interest in any department of the Lord's work. My heart trembles for the ark of God. Do I see any who are keepers of the vineyards of others, and are not keeping their own. Where, then, shall this trembling heart find rest? The composition of the army to whom the ark of God is committed, may but too well account for the trembling of an Eli's heart. Let us ask if no company or army of men may be got together, to whom Eli could see the ark of God committed without his heart trembling—at least so very anxiously. 1. In the first place, let them all be men who come, not as fancying that the Lord hath need of them, but as feeling that they have need of Him. This is our primary and capital qualification. We are to have no self-righteous, self-confident cavaliers, who would either hire themselves to Christ for a reward, or espouse His cause with an air of condescending patronage, as if they were doing Him a favour. Secondly, let all who flock to the Lord's standard at first, or continue to rally round it, make sure and thorough work of the settlement of their covenant with the Lord himself. Finally, let all in this army recognise and feel their responsibility—the peculiar sacredness of the trust committed to them, and its extreme liability to receive damage in their hands. Then, though their infirmities may be many, and they may often feel themselves to be in straits, let them be assured that it is not on their account that Eli's heart will tremble for the ark of God. II. Besides the composition of the army into whose hands the ark may have come, THE OCCASIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH SEEM TO BRING IT FORWARD IN BATTLE, AND TO PERIL IT ON THE ISSUE OF BATTLE, MAY CAUSE NOT A LITTLE

TREMBLING OF HEART FOR ITS SAFETY. We might here speak of such occasions as that on which the Israelites sustained a miserable defeat at the hands of the Amalekites and Canaanites, when they would have taken the ark with them in their unwarranted enterprise, had not Moses sternly refused to let it go out of the camp (Numb. xiv. 40-45). There is not always at hand a Moses to keep the ark from being involved in the hazards of a presumptuous enterprise. It is the prayer of every true servant and soldier of the Lord, that the din of war and controversy may speedily come to an end, and the Church may dwell safely in a quiet habitation. The world, indeed, is apt to judge otherwise of those who maintain the Lord's cause, especially in troublous times, stigmatising them as troublesome and pestilent sowers of sedition, or as lovers of strife, seeking to turn the world upside down. "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard; rest and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Askelon, and against the seashore? There hath he appointed it" (Jer. xlvii. 6, 7). Quiet! rest! how can it be? Satan is not bound; the world still lieth in wickedness; heresies, divisions, strifes, abound; Babylon is not yet fallen. And seeing how things most sacred are now at issue on the field of strife, and how much risk there is, in such stirring times, of the kindling of that wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God, as well as the scheming of that wisdom of man which is foolishness with God—how shall not Eli's heart tremble for the ark of God! Is there, then, no source of consolation in the prospect of such trials and commotions as these? Had anyone sought to comfort the blind old man, as he sat upon a seat by the wayside watching, and to allay the agitation of his soul—he might have been reminded that what his heart trembled for was the ark of God; that God himself, therefore, might not be expected to care for it; and that for him to be so anxious concerning it, was almost like distrusting God. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. Ichabod, the glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.—*Ichabod*:—There was a dark cloud over Israel's firmament. It was a night of gloom; but amidst the revelry and excitement of sin, few could hear the heavings of the commonwealth, or discern the signs of the times that betokened national disaster. At length catastrophe came. The independence of the people was broken. The ark of God—the visible representation of Divine majesty—was in the hands of the Philistines. The outward form, the last remaining evidence of national religion, was lost. It indicates lamentable ignorance on the part of the elders of Israel, when they proposed to bring the ark of God to the field of battle—as if their God was not in all places, and able to help those who called upon him in faith. We do not wonder that when Eli beheld Israel's sun setting in such darkness his own flickering light paled and died away. "Precious in the sight of God is the death of His saints," but it was a sad scene in Israel when the ark of God was taken, and the pious priest who had ministered so long before it, gave up the ghost under the heavy tidings. Truly was *Ichabod*, the glory is departed, the appropriate name of Israel. The ark of God was taken! And Israel, who had staked all their remaining piety within its mystic timbers, were left without their God. Their glory departed. It was the ebbing of their national religion. It was the blight on their spiritual profession. It sealed their estrangement from their God. There may have been, as we know there were, solitary instances of godliness remaining. There were *Elkanahs* and *Hannahs*, and such as they, who lived in sequestered nooks, and who kept alive a witness for the Lord. There was a *Samuel* in the deserted *Tabernacle*, in whose piety the hopes of the believing lay infolded, expecting from his growth the revival of religion and the recovery of independence. But meanwhile oppression, sin, and impiety afflicted the land. The people seemed for a season left to the sad fruits of their own ungodly course. This dark episode is suggestive of several important lessons. 1. It reveals the character of believers in perilous times. They tremble for the ark of God. When sin increases, piety degenerates, and the judgments of God alarm, believers tremble for the ark. In times of rebuke, and blasphemy, and sin, the genuine believer trembles for the cause of Christ. His dearest earthly interest is there. His Saviour's interest is there. The welfare of the soul is there. More than any other terrestrial object does the ark of God concern him. For its preservation does he pray and toil, and weep and watch. 2. We learn also the danger of a mere profession

of religion. To have no more than the outward form is to be as Israel were when they thought the ark would save them from the Philistines. Over how many professors has this mournful title been inscribed! They surrounded the ark of God, revered its mystic symbols, were enrolled in the membership of the Church, partook of its sacraments, rejoiced in its sanctuaries, and hoped for heaven; but having a name to live while they were dead, neglecting the one thing needful—a personal interest in Christ—they realised at last only the miserable wail, "Ichabod," as they sunk into a lost eternity. 3. We learn also the advantage of personal piety in perilous times. Though Eli shared the judgment which overspread Israel and ruined his house, it was well with that aged saint when he fell down dead at the gate of Shiloh. He was saved, yet so as by fire. And though the wife of Phinehas shared the woe which afflicted the land and desolated her home—though an accumulation of sorrows and her painful solicitude at once oppressed her—it was well with her in dying. Her piety was her blessing. We doubt not that there were even in the army on the field a faithful few who were prepared to die, who mourned the infatuation of their brethren, and who rested on the Lord. To such, death on a field of battle would be their entrance into the saints' everlasting rest. Amidst the ungodliness and spiritual carelessness which often mark soldiers in a camp, it is blessed to know that some have kept the faith and died in Christ. Along with our sad memories of the winter before Sebastopol, we have comfortable thoughts of some who, while they fought bravely and fell in their country's service, passed away to glory. Of one, and he did not stand alone, it is told that after being twelve hours in the trenches, or out all night on picket, he visited hospitals and prayed with the dying, distributed tracts and exhorted the living. The man of prayer was a captain of courage; and amidst the gloom of that memorable night, a sudden moonbeam revealed Hedley Vicars waving his sword and crying, "This way 97th!" Another moment and he was lying in his blood. But so striking had been his personal consistency, that his brave men could testify that it was well with their captain then. (R. Steel.) *Ichabod*.—These histories have a permanent meaning, and an up-to-date application. God deals with the Church to-day as He dealt with Israel in days gone by. The spiritual Israel is akin to the natural and the national Israel. Well, the Church of God, the chosen seed, is doubtless suffering defeat. I doubt very much if the Church of God is even holding its own to-day. I believe in the final triumph of Christianity, I am sure that Christ will reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; but I confess that if I look candidly and without prejudice at the signs of the times I am bound to say that here and there if not everywhere, Israel is getting the worst of it, and the Church of God is being beaten slowly back. Be sure of this; the fault is not with God. You know the advice of these elders of Israel. They decided that the ark of the covenant of the Lord, which was resident at Shiloh, should be brought, and that the battle should be renewed with this as the standard. Surely victory would then result. The mischief was deeper than the elders of Israel imagined; it was not to be cured by the presence even of the ark of the covenant of God. That seemed only to add to the disaster, for itself was taken prisoner, and the two licentious sons of Eli, who bore it into the battle, who, we may believe, fought bravely for its preservation, were slain hard by the outspread wings of the golden cherubim. Wherein did the mistake of these people consist? I think we shall find that it was a three-fold error. I. In the first place, **THEY ACTED ON HUMAN IMPULSE, INSTEAD OF ON DIVINE COMMAND.** A distinct command is recorded, that when once Israel was settled in the land of promise the ark, with the Tabernacle, should remain at a fixed place. It was not to be brought to the people. The people were to be humble enough to come to it. In this case, therefore, if they were not distinctly disobeying God's command, they were acting without a Divine injunction, and this is always a dangerous venture. We may be as disobedient by acting without a command as we can be by actually running in the face of a distinct injunction. We cannot be too precise. Let us do what God hath bidden us, and none other. Let there be no alteration of God's way. Add not to the ordinances, nor detract from them. Make no addition to, or adulteration in the doctrines. Do not imagine that enthusiasm will suffice. You Christian workers, there are a hundred plans for doing work for God to-day of which we have to ask first of all, "Has God appointed this?" If we enquire of the Lord before we go down to the battle, and before we take any weapon in our hands, certain of those

things which are most approved by men will be found not to have the warrant of Scripture, and to be therefore mere wooden swords, which, whereas they may inspire some enthusiasm, mainly because they are our own manufacture, will be broken at the first onslaught of the foe. So much for Israel's first mistake. Let us not do likewise. II. Secondly, and still more seriously, **THEY SUBSTITUTED THE SYMBOLICAL FOR THE SPIRITUAL.** Therein they grieved the Spirit of God, therein they played the fool exceedingly, after the fashion of the dog in the fable, who let go his goodly joint of meat that he might grasp the shadow. Now, it must be admitted that the ark was, by Divine institution, a symbol of God's presence. The contents also pointed in the same direction; but these people, elders though they were—and who can wonder that the multitude went wrong when their leaders were astray?—these people confused the symbol with the Presence itself. This superstition was the natural result of the decay of religion. I venture to say that the Israelites in this case were little better than the Philistines themselves. The Philistines, if I mistake not, had images of their gods in the battle by way of standards and flags, and Israel seems to have said, "We must have a standard, too, we must cherish in our midst a symbol of our God." They craved for something tangible and visible. Nor are we less guilty who forget that our religion is altogether spiritual, that our warfare and its weapons are spiritual. We are not less guilty who mistake forms for internal power. We are not less blameworthy who, having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof. How careful some are of the externals. I believe in creeds, but oh, it is an awful thing to have a creed only. A religion of the head does not cleanse the heart, a religion that touches only externals evidently does not affect the internals, and the heart and the soul are the things with which we have to do. Thank God for the Sabbath, but a rigid observance of the Sabbath is not enough; we want to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. III. But there was another mistake, deeper than either of these. **THEY FAILED TO PERCEIVE THAT SIN WAS THE SECRET OF DEFEAT,** sin on the part of Eli's two sons, sin on his own part, and sin, if I mistake not, which was shared in by all the people, for there is an indication in Psalm lxxviii. which speaks of that time, that the people were estranged from God. This it was that weakened their arms, and prevented their success. Even Balaam could not curse God's people, though he longed to do it. Why? Because there was no iniquity in them, because God Himself beheld no perverseness in them. Therefore Balaam had to say, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." These people shouted, but it was not the shout of a king; it was the shout of presumption, and therefore closely preceded and heralded a disastrous defeat. A worldly Church is nigh unto cursing. A grieved God means a conquered Church. I tell you the ark itself is valueless if there be an Achan in the camp. Do you know that in this same place God wrought wondrously a little later. Read the story, at your leisure, in chap. vii. It is only a chapter or two further on than this, but oh how the scene has changed. Ichabod then gave place to Ebenezer. The days of the Church will brighten and her power be as of yore when she comes back to primitive practices and doctrines, and to the old-time holiness, and to zeal for God, love for souls, and reverence for the Holy Ghost. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*) *The concern of the pious for religion in peril:*—The person by whom this mournful language was uttered, was the wife of one who, by descent and occupation, had been associated with the momentous office of the priesthood of ancient Israel. That people were engaged in war with the neighbouring nation of the Philistines, their persevering and inveterate foe. I. First, we propose to notice the PROPERTIES OF TRUE RELIGION, AS INDICATED BY THE SYMBOL, UNDER WHICH IT IS REPRESENTED. "The glory" of Israel, of which the pious mother spake, was "the ark of God;" so called, from the place which it occupied in the ritual of Levitical worship, and because, on account of that place, it became necessarily the token of the whole economy and general interests of religion. The religion possessed by Israel was, really and truly, its "glory." 1. Following this mode of illustration, you will observe, first, that the ark was associated with immediate and visible displays of the Divine presence. Above the ark were the mysterious figures of the cherubim, overshadowing it with their outstretched wings, and between the cherubim was the Shechinah, that luminous cloud denominated "the cloud of glory," which betokened the Divine presence, and from which, in audible voice, God uttered His will and His promises to the priests whom He had chosen. In the economy of the Gospel, the presence of God has been possessed,

not indeed, you must remember, by outward and visible signs and tokens, but spiritually, and with a spiritual clearness, which, in the present state, cannot be surpassed. That presence is vouchsafed in the work of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the operations and influences of the Divine Spirit, whose office it is to apply the work of the Lord Jesus to the minds of men. And therefore it is, that the ancient symbol is used in reference to them both.

2. Observe, secondly, the ark was identified with the Divinely appointed mediation for the pardon of human sin. The covering or lid of the ark was denominated "the mercy-seat," because the priest, by Divine command, sprinkled upon it the blood of the sacrifices, which had been offered in propitiatory atonement for sin. He then, according to the same command, interceded, that for the sake of the blood so presented before God, pardon and favour with Him might be obtained. Now this whole arrangement will be found directly typical of the one Saviour, as revealed under the economy of the Gospel; and the victim, and the priest and the mercy-seat were all made to terminate and concentrate in Him. The mediation in this manner set forth—a mediation precisely adapted to the circumstances and wants of man, and preserving its efficacy unexhausted in all successive ages—this is the supreme and permanent glory of the Gospel. Apart from it, the glory of that Gospel would indeed be but dim and cloudy; and when you observe the mode of its indication, and the value of its influence, you will doubtless again recognise how well your religion is represented by the ancient symbol, and how richly it deserves the appellation of "the glory."

3. Again, you will observe, that the ark was the instrument of Divine protection, in behalf of the people, who possessed and who rightly applied to it. On various occasions in the history of Israel, we find that it was connected with marvellous preservation, deliverance, and victory. Now, the religion of the Gospel is directly the agent of God, in imparting protection and deliverance to man. If the Gospel be viewed in a political aspect, we are sure that it is to the nations now, what the ark once was to Israel of old. We might, without any difficulty, show from multiplied evidence, that, for the sake of His truth, God had been pleased in this manner to protect and to shield us, in our own land; and there is abundant reason also to conclude, that just in proportion as the nations of the earth become imbued with the vital spirit of Christianity, they become protected against the very elements which would naturally operate to subvert and to destroy. If the Gospel be viewed in a spiritual aspect—in relation to the interests of the souls of men, we know how, by its mediatorial power and grace, brought home through the agency of the Spirit, men are guarded against the various adversaries, by whom, from time to time, their progress in the present world is assailed—how they triumph over "the last enemy," and how they are exalted to the final inheritance of heaven, where they will abide in triumph, in bliss, and in glory, for ever and ever.

II. Let us now proceed to notice THE DANGER IN WHICH THE INTERESTS OF RELIGION, LIKE THE ANCIENT SYMBOL, MAY APPEAR TO BE INVOLVED. There are not a few circumstances occurring from time to time, when the religion of the Gospel appears, according to human judgment, in its various interests, to be in jeopardy, in danger of dishonourable defeat and injury.

1. And you will observe, first, that apparent danger to the interests of religion arises from the efforts of avowed and open adversaries to its claims. From the commencement of its career, to such efforts the Gospel has been exposed. In its earliest period, it encountered the malignant hostility of the Jews, who, mistaking alike the nature of their own system and of the Gospel, crucified "the Lord of Glory," and when He had triumphantly risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the Church," that they might overwhelm it.

2. We observe, that apparent danger also arises to the interests of Christianity, from the evils which exist and are cherished, within its own internal sphere. The danger to the ark of God as much arose from the habits and dispositions of the Israelites themselves, as from the array and hostile exertions of the Philistines. We very briefly notice what we fear from the internal aspect of the Gospel, so as to constitute its existing or its anticipated danger.

(1.) And there are the errors by which the doctrines or truths of the Gospel are compromised, or substantially abandoned.

(2.) Again, we may mention the discords by which the union of those who profess the Gospel is jarred, and broken.

(3.) There are, again, the worldly conformities, by which the line of separation between the professed disciples of the Gospel, and the votaries of sin, is diminished, and rendered well-nigh imperceptible. And thus it is, that there

is jeopardy to that, which we ought to keep, and not to part with for worlds. And when to these evils we add the external adversaries, which have already passed before your view, there appears a combination, which may well strike the timid with terror, while it subdues even the boldest into a spirit of solemnity and awe. III. We now proceed to observe **THE EMOTIONS, WHICH THE APPARENT DANGER TO THE INTERESTS OF RELIGION MUST PROPERLY PRODUCE.** 1. The emotions of the mother of the infant, whose case is here recorded, were those of fear and of grief, for fear and grief ended her own life; and she perpetuated her impassioned emotion in the name which she gave to her offspring: "she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel;" "and she said, The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." Emotions of the same class—those of fear and grief—may well fill the hearts of Christians, when they look upon the apparent danger to their religion in itself, and without regard to those consoling considerations, to which it will be our duty to allude. Recognising the value of Christianity in all respects to every class of human character and human interests, we cannot contemplate the probability of any injury being done to it, but in a view of immense and almost inconceivable magnitude. Were we to have placed before us the prospect of the downfall of religion in our own land, what a sad and mournful catastrophe would then be before us! If our "ark" were taken, what would then remain? Think you, that we should long retain the possession of the riches, by which we have been adorned, and hold our high station among the surrounding nations of the earth. 2. But, having noticed the nature of these emotions, we must now observe the manner, in which they may be soothed. The ark of God, notwithstanding the calamity which had happened to it, had a power with it, which secured its essential preservation. You read its history and the history of the attendant power which directed it, in the chapters which follow, until it came back in triumph unto the nation, to whom it appertained. You are doubtless aware also, with regard to Him, whose power is with His Church in the Gospel, that He has announced positive intentions respecting it, that it shall "go on conquering and to conquer," that it shall survive and overcome all the efforts which are made to injure and to blast it, and that it shall at last receive an empire over the whole universe. This great intention, which forms a part of the purpose of the Father, has been sealed by the blood of the Son, and by the promise and the influence of the Spirit. Amidst all that appears ominous and dark in the times which are before us, we are to rest upon these truths, with encouragement and with hope. 3. Observe, finally, the deportment to which these emotions should prompt. While we exercise this consoling reliance upon the purpose and upon the promise of God, we are not to forget the importance of employing those means which are placed within our grasp, and which it is our bounden duty to use, in order that we ourselves may be instrumental in meeting the danger, and in attributing victory to the cause and to the empire of the Redeemer. (1.) Allow me to suggest that there ought to be on our part, and on the part of all professing Christians, a careful removal of those imperfections, by which we may have been tainted and corrupted. Has there been any compromise, or abandonment of the doctrines and truths of the Gospel? Then let us return to a faithful and steadfast adherence to those doctrines, and "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," "holding fast the form of sound words." Has there been a display of discord and disunion? (2.) Again: with this removal of the existing imperfections of the Church, there must also be great zeal in behalf of the unconverted. (3.) And then again, there is required also an importunity of prayer. (*J. Parsons.*) *Despair of religion sometimes mistaken*:—It is certainly something that we are perfectly familiar with that precious memorials become popular idols, and come in course of time to be bound up of necessity with the ideas of safety and of progress and even of spiritual liberty and truth. When the flame of the temple of Vesta went out upon the Roman Forum, those who had known that it had been in existence for centuries said, "The glory has departed from Rome;" and when it has happened from time to time that some central ceremony has been suspended or some special relic has been destroyed, there have always been at once certain people to arise and to utter some despair of the Divine Commonwealth, and to suppose that just in the existence of a material and perishable object there lies some sort of guarantee of the Divine favour and of the Divine help. The great days in the history of religion are the days when God teaches us the failure and illusion of all this, that God rests nothing upon

the perishable and upon the material, only on faith in Him and obedience to His will in righteousness. (*Silvester Horne, M.A.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1—5. And the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.—*The hypocritical smitten before the real:*—The word Philistine signifies strangers or emigrants; their descent is obscure, but good reasons are assigned for considering them of Semitic extraction. Ashdod was one of the five Philistine Satrapies, being an inland town, 34 miles north of Gaza, now called Eshud. "And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into the house of Dagon" (ver. 2). They knew the power of Israel's God; did they by this conduct hope to effect a compromise, or were they offering this holy spoil as a tribute of homage to their national Deity? **I. THE HYPOCRITICAL SMITTEN BEFORE THE REAL.** This world is one vast temple, filled with the unreal and untrue. 1. The Dagon of false religious systems. Superstition has enthroned its idol, ignorance its contradictions, Buddhism its sanguinary rites, Confucianism its standard of ethics, and the honest heathen his fancies of terror. There are the impositions of Mahomet, the falsehoods of his history, and the deceptions of his creed. 2. The Dagon of doctrinal heresy. 3. There is the Dagon of mercantile life. The externalisms of trade are imposing and attractive, but how unworthy its motive—how frequently are its gains the result of cunning deception, fraudulent imposition, or mischievous adulterations, and these criminal extortions are justified by the severity of competition, or the ungenerous demands and arbitrary fancies of the purchasing community. Before the ark of Godly principle and honest courtesy, these "tricks of trade" must suffer an ignominious defeat. 4. There are the Dagon of personal religious life. Devotion is formal; religious work mechanical; they are but pictures of the true. The piety of others consists in a spasmodic performance of the holy, in feelings of emotion, fitful and uncertain, incited more by circumstances than by steady faith. 5. The Dagon of political life. Injustice has formed the basis of law, the enforcement of which has issued in oppression and misery. How often have our social interests been blighted by the pandering politics of chuckling statesmen! Christian truth has been refused its required homage; human sagacity has been worshipped in its stead. But one day, when the ark shall be brought into the temple, this state of things will be terminated. Instead, we shall find monarchs laying their crowns at the feet of Jesus; ruling only in accordance with the principle of His life, and living in harmony with the precepts of His Word. Then shall human legislation be the expression of Divine sentiment, and the senate become a synonyme for the sanctuary. 6. It had successive opportunity of recovering its defeat. "And they took Dagon and set him in his place again." For how many chapters of history would this be an appropriate heading? Should it not be written under the record of Smithfield's martyrdom? and what more fitting inscription could be found for the door of the Inquisition Room? But to-day, upon the floor of Europe's Temple we find its shattered wreck. Its defeat was (1.) Rapid, "early in the morning." (2.) Unquestionable: "Dagon was fallen." (3.) Ignominious, "his face to the ground." (4.) Signalled (ver. 5), In this superstitious folly they perpetuated the memory of their own disgrace! In this picture we have an outline of the world's future history, when all in antagonism to the Divine nature shall be destroyed beyond the power of restoration. **II. THE UNHOLY DESIRING THE DEPARTURE OF THE REAL.** "The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us" (ver. 7). This is the cry of all unhallowed life. 1. A Divine Affliction. The sinful is sure to be afflicted by contact with the true. A diseased eye cannot open itself to the light without pain; neither can a corrupt nature behold spotless purity, unsullied truth, without being stricken by its brightness. Simon Peter cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," and in so doing articulated the deepest feeling of degenerate life. In order to happy association with the ark, man's receptive faculties must be touched by the Divine finger; then, with adjusted

relations and restored harmony, the holy will be appreciated, exemption from affliction will be secured, and its permanent residence desired. 2. A Supreme Council. They sent, therefore, and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them (ver. 8). The people are in a fearful extremity; and, driven almost to desperation by the fierceness of their sufferings, are ready to execute any scheme likely to ensure relief. But it was a council without a God. 3. An unavailing Decree. "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath" (ver. 8). "How many, when in sorrow, acting upon their own impulses, extend their affliction to others" (ver. 9). III. THE UNHOLY SEEKING ADVICE AS TO THE DISPOSITION OF THE REAL. 1. Inquiry started. "What shall we do to the ark of the Lord?" (vi. 2). 2. Anxiety displayed. "Tell us wherewith we shall send it to His place" (vi. 2). 3. A solution suggested. "But in any wise return Him a trespass offering" (vi. 3-9). 14. THE REAL INQUISITIVELY INVESTIGATED. "And He smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they looked into to the ark of the Lord" (vi. 19). 1. Presumption punished. "He smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men" (vi. 19). 2. Reverence inspired. "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" (vi. 19). In the next chapter we have the real penitentially sought and joyfully obtained. LESSONS:—(1.) The unyielding supremacy of God. (2.) The affliction consequent upon opposition to His authority. (3.) That God is not bound to even the most sacred symbols of His presence. (4.) That great caution should be exercised when in contact with sacred things. (5.) In victory remember the God of Israel. (J. S. Ezell, M.A.) *The ark in the house of Dagon*:—I. I OBSERVE IT IS HERE SUGGESTED THAT THINGS WHICH ARE GOOD FOR SOME PEOPLE TO HAVE MAY BE QUITE THE OPPOSITE FOR OTHERS.—When the Philistines knew that the ark had been brought into the camp of Israel they were afraid, and said, "God is come into the camp." . . . And no doubt they imagined that in it they had captured a great prize. But the ark of God did not do for the Philistines what it had done for the Israelites. On the contrary, it brought to them only disaster, disease, and destruction. The ark had been a blessing to the Israelites, it was a curse to the Philistines. Now is it not the case that what was true of the ark is also true of many things among us? For example, there is wealth. What a blessing it has been to one generation, but what a curse sometimes to the next! To the father it has been a great comfort, to his thriftless, indolent son, ruination of both body and soul. Not infrequently do we find people regarding money very much in the same light as the Philistines regarded the ark. With not a few money means omnipotence! They will sacrifice health, probity—anything, to get money. And when they have got it: what then? Is it any enjoyment to them? Does it bring comfort? Does it make them happy? No; not in a single instance, where it has been come by in an unjust or unhealthy way. God gave the Israelites the ark, at any rate He put it into their hearts to make it, and it was to them a great blessing; so if God gives a man wealth, or if He puts him into the way of making it, his fortune may be a great blessing to him. But if money does not come in this way, depend upon it we are better without it. And what is true in relation to wealth is equally true with regard to everything else which we do not possess, but which we may covet. Are you inclined sometimes to covet another man's position, and murmur because your lot is so hard and difficult? Let me, then, ask if you have reason to think that your lot is from the Lord? If to this question your only answer is "Yes," then be assured that hard and difficult though it may be, for you it is the best, and if you had your wish, were you somehow to slip into the position you covet, you might not find it "the bed of roses" you expected, and a very short experience in it might make you long very eagerly for the old life. What is more delightful on a wintry day than to walk through a greenhouse, where the plants and flowers luxuriate, as in the warm sunshine of summer? But the greenhouse is suited only for certain plants. There are plants to whom its atmosphere would be death, that need the storm as well as the sunshine, cold as well as heat, frost as well as dew, the wild blast of winter as well as the warm breezes of summer. So if God has not put you in His greenhouse, nor in some shady, sheltered corner of His great garden, but in some spot where you stand exposed to every wind that blows, to the tempest, the biting cold, in a word, to all nature's ruder elements, do not fret or be discouraged. God's purpose is to make you a strong and noble character, and to do this the stern discipline of your life is doubtless needed. So be content with what you have, and with where you are, remembering that if you had your neighbour's

things you might, in their possession, be as miserable as the Philistines were all the time the ark was in their country. II. THE NARRATIVE BEFORE US SUGGESTS THAT GOD IS A JEALOUS GOD.—The Philistines put the ark of the Lord in "the house of Dagon, and set it by the side of Dagon." But when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was on his face again before the ark, and his head and both the palms of his hands were cut off, and lying upon the threshold, and "only the stump of Dagon," the fish part, "was left to him." If there had been a "Dominie Sampson" among those priests, he certainly would have cried out, *Prodigious!* And it was prodigious in the truest sense, for it was a foreshadowing of God's great law, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." God's ark must not be placed side by side with Dagon. Now we Christians, those of us, thank God, who are living in the light of His countenance as well as those who "see men only, as trees walking," have need to take care, lest we also provoke the jealousy of God. We must never place Him or His sacred things on the same level, and side by side, with our own things—our business, or our family, or any of our earthly belongings. He only is God, and we must place Him above, infinitely above all else. All along the lines of human life the tendency has been in the direction of idolatry. The ancient people of God fell into it, as we know, again and again, and they suffered in consequence. And though "the form changeth," the thing, the evil still liveth. It is right to make the home as snug and comfortable and pleasant as you can, and to take a pride in doing so. But does the home claim as much attention as God, and the things of God claim? Nay, does it claim more? Is it true that your home fills your heart, and that consequently God is shut out of it? Or is it true that it occupies quite as much of its room as God does? Is it in any sense and measure an idol? Then listen to me whilst I tell you what will some day happen. That home will one day fall to delight you. You will see no beauty in the pictures which adorn its walls. You will be unable to find comfort or rest in any part of it. Yes—your home, if you make it your idol, will come to present itself to you in quite as pitiable a light as that in which the Philistines beheld their god. And what about the children? "I am fond of children," said Thomas Binney. "I think them the poetry of the world—the fresh flowers of our hearts and homes." It is well spoken. But how many a sad tale may be told touching the children, for how many of these "fresh flowers" have drooped and died? Yes, and how many parents have had to confess, as they have gazed upon the face of a child cold in death, "Alas, alas, I loved him too well, and the God who gave him, and who has taken him back, too little?" Over all human affections we must build our temple, and in it, we must have only one altar, and only one God—the Lord God of Israel—for remember He is a jealous God. He loves us so much that He can bear no rival. III. THIS NARRATIVE SUGGESTS THAT AFFLICTION MAY NOT LEAD TO REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION. Apparently the first effect of God's judgments upon them was the same as in the case of Pharaoh, for their priests and diviners charged them, saying, "Wherefore do ye harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?" Now people often speak as if affliction had a softening tendency; producing, or at any rate, leading up to true repentance, and thorough conversion to God. But this idea has little, if any, good foundation to rest upon. I believe the tendency on the whole to be the opposite. Where there is no grace—where no thought or feeling of the grace of God is entertained in the heart—the tendency of affliction is to sour and harden. There may be exceptions to this rule, but I believe they are few. And this must be said, that afflictions, by themselves, never brought any soul into a state of true repentance. It is not judgment that wins the alien to God, but mercy. David said, "It was good for me that I have been afflicted," but then David was a child, and a good child of God. I say all this with a definite, practical object in view, viz., to stir us up to increased zeal in our teachings and preachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God's judgments upon Pharaoh did not lead him to repentance; His judgments upon the Philistines did not lead them to repentance; but when Peter and Paul preached the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, the unbelieving Gentile, as well as the unbelieving Jew, was pricked in his heart, and in how many instances savingly converted to God? (*Adam Scott.*) *Dagon's ups and downs*:—When the civil power was joined with the spiritual, and the arm of flesh came in to patronise and to take into connection with itself the arm of God's strength, then it was that the ark was borne away in triumph by its foes. Another lesson may be learned from the incident before us. When the Philistines had beaten the

Israelites in battle, and captured the sacred chest called the ark, they boasted and gloried as though they had defeated God Himself. This touched at once the honour of Jehovah, and because He is a jealous God this boded good for Israel. The fact that God is a jealous God has often a terrible side to us, for it leads to our chastisement when we grieve Him; this, indeed, led to the defeat of Israel. But it has also a bright side towards us, for His jealousy flames against His foes even more terribly than against His friends. Now, then, whenever at any time infidelity or superstition shall so prevail as to discourage your minds, take you comfort out of this—that in all these God's honour is compromised. Have they blasphemed His name? Then He will protect that name. Where the living God comes into the soul, Dagon, or the idol god of sin and worldliness, must go down.

I. THE COMING BACK OF THE ARK INTO DAGON'S TEMPLE WAS AN APT SIMILE OF THE COMING OF CHRIST INTO THE SOUL. Dagon, according to the best information, was the fish-god of Philistia; perhaps borrowed from the Sidonians and men of Tyre, whose main business was upon the sea, and who therefore invented a marine deity. The upper part of Dagon was a man or woman, and the lower part of the idol was carved like a fish. We get a very good idea of it from the common notion of the fictitious, fabulous creature called a mermaid. Dagon was just a merman or mermaid; only, of course, there was no pretence of his being alive. He was a carved image. The temple at Ashdod was, perhaps, the cathedral of Dagon, the chief shrine of his worship; and there he sat erect upon the high altar with pompous surroundings. The ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts was a small wooden box overlaid with gold, by no means a very cumbersome or bulky matter, but nevertheless very sacred, because it had a representative character, and symbolised the covenant of God.

1. We have now Dagon and the ark in the same temple, sin and grace in the same heart, but this state of things cannot long abide. No man can serve two masters, and even if he could then two masters would not agree to be so served. The two great principles of sin and grace will not abide in peace with each other, they are as opposite as fire and water.

2. Very likely your Dagon is in the shape of self-righteousness. I shall call it Dagon, for it is nothing better: one of the worst idols in the whole world is the idol of self. The self-righteous man boasts that he is as good as other people, if not rather better, although he is not a Christian.

3. Perhaps the man never had much of this vain-glorious self-righteousness, but he served the Dagon of besetting and beloved sin.

4. Now the parallel may be run a little further: This fall of Dagon very soon began to be perceived.

5. Now, what happened on the night mentioned in the text? Dagon fell before the ark when it was all quiet and still in the temple. Thought is the channel of immense benefit to the soul. Shut the temple doors and let all be still, and then will the Holy Ghost work wonders in the soul.

II. THE SETTING UP OF DAGON—THE SECOND TIME, AND HIS SECOND FALL, VERY WELL REPRESENT THE BATTLE GOING ON IN THE SOUL BETWEEN SIN AND GRACE.

1. Even thus Satan and the flesh come into our souls and try to set our fallen Dagon up again with some measure of success. It often happens that in young converts there comes a period when it looks as if they had altogether apostatized and gone back to their former ways. It seems as if the work of God were not real in their souls, and grace was not triumphant. Do you wonder at it? I have ceased to wonder. The gospel is preached, and the man accepts it, and there is a marvellous difference in him; but when he goes among his old companions, although he is resolved not to fall into his former sins, they try him very severely. He is assailed in a thousand ways! I have known a man when he has been tempted to go into evil company refuse again, and again, and again. His tempters have laughed at him, and he has borne it all, but at last he has lost his temper; and as soon as the enemies have seen his passion boiling up they have cried out, "Ah, there you are! We have got you." At such a time as that the poor man is apt to cry, "Alas, I cannot be a believer, or else I should not have done this." Now, all this is a violent attempt of Satan and the flesh to set Dagon up again. Sometimes they do for a time set Dagon up again and cause great sorrow in the soul. The wanderers have come back, weeping and sighing, to own that they have dishonoured their profession: and what has been the result in the long run? Why, they have had more humility, more tenderness of heart, more love to Christ, more gratitude, than they had before.

2. Now, notice that although they again set Dagon up, he had to go down again with a worse fall. The idol's head was gone, and even so the reigning power of sin is utterly broken and destroyed, its beauty, its cunning, its glory are all dashed to atoms. This is the result of the grace of God, and the

sure result of it, if it comes into the soul, however long the conflict may continue, and however desperate the efforts of Satan to regain his empire. O, believer, sin may trouble thee, but it shall not tyrannize over thee. Then, too, the hands of Dagon were broken off, and even thus the active power, the working power of sin is taken away. Both the palms of the idol's hands were cut off upon the threshold, so that he had not a hand left. Neither right-handed sin nor left-handed sin shall remain in the believer when God's sanctifying grace fetches Dagon down. 3. This happened, too, if you notice, very speedily; for we are told a second time that, when they arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face. III. **THOUGH THE FISH-GOD WAS THUS MAIMED AND BROKEN, YET THE STUMP OF DAGON WAS LEFT TO HIM.** The original Hebrew is, "Only Dagon was left to him," or "only the fish": only the fishy part remained. The head and the upper portions were broken away, there remained only the fishy tail of Dagon, and that was all: but that was not broken. 1. Now, this is the business which brings us so much sorrow—that the stump of Dagon is left to him. There is the old corruption within us, and there is no use denying it, because denying it will put us off our guard, will make many of the puzzles of life to be quite unanswerable, and often bring upon us great confusion of soul. The other law is within us as well as the law of grace. 2. The stump of Dagon is still left; and because it is left, dear friends, it is a thing to be watched against, for though that stony stump of Dagon would not grow in the Philistine temple, yet they would make a new image, and exalt it again, and bow before it as before. Alas, the stump of sin within us is not a slab of stone, but full of vitality, like the tree cut down, of which Job said, "At the scent of water it will bud." Leave the sin that is in you to itself, and let temptation come in the way, and you shall see that which will blind your eyes with weeping. IV. **THAT THOUGH THE STUMP OF DAGON WAS NOT TAKEN OUT OF THE PHILISTINE TEMPLE WE MAY GO BEYOND THE HISTORY AND REJOICE THAT IT WILL BE TAKEN FROM OUR HEARTS.** The day is coming, brother, sister, in which there will be no more inclination in you to sin than there is in an angel. John Bunyan represents Mercy as laughing in her sleep. She had a dream, she said; and she laughed because of the great favours which were yet to be bestowed upon her. Well, if some of you were to dream to-night that the great thing which I have spoken of had actually happened to you, so that you were completely free from all tendency to sin, would not you also be as them that dream and laugh for very joy. Think of it—no more cause for watchfulness, no more need of weeping over the day's sin before you fall asleep at night; no more sin to confess, no devil to tempt you, no worldly care, no lusting, no envy, no depression of spirit, no unbelief, nothing of the kind—will not this be a very large part of the joy of heaven? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The fall of Dagon*:—The text reminds us of four things. I. **THE INEVITABLE DOOM OF WRONG.** Wrong in markets, in governments, churches, in all institutions, and in all lives must fall. II. **THE DESTINED DEPRIVATION OF SINNERS.** Dagon was the object in which the men of Ashdod centred the deepest sympathies of their soul—their god. No loss to a man is equal to the loss of his god, the object he loves most; and every sinner must experience this loss one day. Whatever he loves and prizes most must go from him. III. **THE SILENT WORKING OF GOD.** (D. Thomas, D.D.) **They took Dagon, and set him in his place again.**—*The repair of broken ideals*:—Because you have broken your purpose do not allow it to go unattended. Even the heathen with so base a conception of divinity as Dagon was, when Dagon fell to the ground, lifted him up again and put him in his place. When, not your idol, but your bright ideal, falls to the ground, though its head and its feet be broken, lift it up and put in its place again. Because you have broken faith and fealty to that which you meant to be, and meant to do, it is no reason why you should not swear again, and again go forward. Let your ideal stand high and bright and pure, though by it every one of you is condemned, and cast down, as it were, to the very bottom of condemnation. Save that. Even though a man forsake his purpose, though he is recreant to his ideal, though he through months and years goes knowingly wrong, let not his star set. Do not let your ideal go down. (H. W. Beecher.) **The head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off.**—*The helplessness of idols*:—The philosopher Heine, in one of his letters written from Paris, says: "Only with pain could I drag myself to the Louvre, and I was nearly exhausted when I entered the lofty hall where the blessed goddess of beauty, our dear lady of Milo, stands on her pedestal. At her feet I lay a long time, and I wept so passionately that a stone must have had

compassion on me. Therefore the goddess looked down pityingly upon me, yet at the same time inconsolably as though she would say: 'See you not that I have no arms, and that, therefore, I can give you no help?'

Ver. 8. What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel.—*The ark of God*:—It often happens that when a person has at last obtained that which he most desired he does not know what to do with it. This may be said of money after a life of economy and strict attention to business; of repose after a life of toil; and of many other aims and objects in life. Now in the passage quoted you find the Philistines in a similar difficulty: they had obtained possession of that which they considered the greatest prize of warfare. It was a mighty spoil; it caused no little joy to the Philistines; but its loss was a terrible and crushing blow to Israel. The ark had changed hands. The Philistines had now in their custody the Ark of God. It was a sore trouble to them. That material construction is now long ago broken up and destroyed: the wood and gold have perished; but the Divine Presence still lives on. The Church preserves her identity under all adverse circumstances: the Ark remained the same sacred witness to God's Truth wherever carried. (2 Cor. ii. 15-16.) It is wonderful to notice how God's Spirit forces this fact upon the world. The world is compelled to recognise the presence of religion, however it may recoil from the claims of religion. The history of the world ever since the Christian era commenced is a proof of this: what would become of any record of the first three centuries which failed to take account of the religious element? The history of the Roman Empire at that time is, in fact, the history of the Church. History tells you how Christianity springing up in the Roman provinces perplexed the authorities; how at last it spread; how outbreaks of persecution only tended to strengthen and deepen its roots; but yet all proves how the world had begun to ask this question as to the religion of the day: "What shall we do with the Ark of God?" Then, again: how much more attentively the action of the Church is now watched by the public than used to be the case formerly. Whatever it be which relates to religion, there is the same watchfulness from without. Again and again the world enquires, at moments the most trivial, at social parties, at merry meetings, just for the sake of saying something, or to start a subject, "What shall we do with the Ark of God?" And see only how religion is employed to puff literature. Some periodical or magazine is started: it will not sell unless there be an element of religion in it. It is only one other instance of the editor eyeing religion, considering what he can get out of the religious element which will find him readers: he only says, "What shall we do with the Ark of God?" And further. Consider the prejudices of the present day. Mark the obvious success of attempts which at first were regarded cynically or coldly. The world has been convinced that Church principles cannot easily be laughed out of court, and that conscientious convictions are worthy of respect; that blameless lives conduce to the welfare of society. So gradually the world tempers its opposition; it wishes to moderate religious enthusiasm; it desires to reduce the Church to its own level; it would like to enjoy all successes which the Church achieves in fashioning well-ordered citizens; but at the same time the world would tie down the action of the Church to the limits of the popular will. "What shall we do to these men? For that a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all those that dwell in Jerusalem." "What shall we do with the Ark of God?" But with regard to your own relation to holy things; does not this perplexity of the Philistines find an answer in your own hearts? You have lived many years with the light of truth burning brightly before you, God has cast your lot in a Christian land, not in a land of idols. God has blessed you with a religious home, with serious parents. How have you regarded holy things? Have not you sometimes felt them irksome? as if you did not quite know what to do with religion; as if the things of God stood in your way; as if they shackled you; as if they dwarfed the development of your life, and paralysed somewhat the hopes of your career? And yet you did not like to send the Ark away; you would not give up religion; you recognised its value too highly; you were afraid to cast off God and to disown Him; yet a secret wish sprang up that you had never known so much of truth; you almost deemed the heathen happy, because you fancied that he could have no embarrassing scruples. "What were you to do with the Ark of God!" It so often came across your path; every now and then disputing the way; telling you that you must not do this or that. At such moments did not religion seem unwelcome? somewhat as an intruder? For thus it is that religious

scruples do harass men when they least like it. God's mercy sends the Angel to bar the way: and such is God's love, the Angel moves further and further into narrow places, where there is no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left; narrow places where the choice more directly confronts the sinner; where he may see more evidently the blackness of sin in contrast with the pure white light of holiness. There is nothing more contemptible, or more miserable, than shifting about between two opinions. The Philistines were never more wretched than when they were employed in passing on the Ark from one city to another. Shame and disease marked that period of seven months' indecision. It was far better when they sent the Ark back to its rightful owners. At least it was a decided step; there was no halting between two opinions. If you want to insult God, then, use religion as a tool for your own convenience and not as a principle of life. The sin of the world has lain chiefly in this prostitution of religion. It has proved the curse and downfall of nations; the deterioration and ruin of man. Heathen ignorance is better than Christian indifference; depend upon it, nothing is so prolific of infidelity as indecision. Balaam tampering with the commands of God; Ahab sending for, but not obeying, Micaiah; Herod hearing John gladly, but persisting in his adultery; Judas following Jesus, but selling Him for silver; Demas beginning well, but falling away to self-indulgence; these are the emissaries which the devil employs to deceive mankind. Rather learn by God's grace to regard religion and truth's claims not as a moral intrusion, but as affording a principle on which to rule your life. Religion is not a subject to be handled at our will; it is not just now and then to serve our turn, and then to be laid aside for some possible future use; but it is a principle to enter into all our ways. (C. A. Raymond, M.A.)

Ver. 12. The cry of the city.—*The cry of the city*:—There is a hum of the city in its ceaseless activity, a shout in its occasional excitement, a song in its periodic mirth, but a cry in its constant want, distress, pain. Paul heard it at Athens and his "heart was stirred"; Jesus at Jerusalem and "He wept." Do we not hear it in every city, and is not the cry somewhat thus? I.—I am SENSITIVE and might be TOUCHED WITH TRUTH AND LOVE. II.—I am RESTLESS and so always SEEKING SOME UNATTAINED GOOD. III.—I am STRONG and might be POWERFUL FOR GOD AND HUMANITY. IV.—I am SINFUL and must have RELIGION OR RUIN. Does anyone fail to hear these cries, let him listen to "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London," or gaze sadly at "Horrible London," or ponder "The Politics of the very Poor." (*Homilist*.)

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1. And the ark of God was in the country of the Philistines.—*Terrible aspects of God's character*:—At last the ark leaves the land of the Philistines. For seven terrible months it had spread among them anxiety, terror, and death. Nothing but utter ruin seemed likely to spring from a longer residence of the ark in their territories. Glad were they to get rid of it, golden emerods, golden mice, new cart, milch kine, and all. It is a solemn truth that there are aspects of God's character, aspects of the Saviour's character, in which He is only a terror and a trouble. These are the aspects in which God is seen opposed to what men love and prize, tearing their treasures away from them, or tearing them away from their treasures. It is an awful thing to know God in these aspects alone. Yet it is the aspect in which God usually appears to the sinner. It is the aspect in which our consciences present Him when we are conscious of having incurred His displeasure. And while man remains a sinner and in love with his sin he may try to disguise the solemn fact to his own mind, but it is nevertheless true that his secret desire is to get rid of God. (W. G. Blaikie, D.D.)

Ver. 3. Send it not empty.—*Superstition the ape of true devotion*:—These superstitious priests can counsel them not to send away the ark of God empty, but to give it a sin offering. They had not lived so far away from the smoke of Jewish altars, but that they knew God was accustomed to manifold oblations. No.

Israelite could have said better; superstition is the ape of true devotion, and if it look not to the ground of both many times it is hard, by the very outward acts, to distinguish them. Nature itself teacheth us that God loves a full hand. He that hath been so bountiful to us as to give us all looks for a return of some offering from us. If we present Him with nothing but our sins how can we look to be accepted? The sacrifices under the Gospel are spiritual; with these must we come into the presence of God if we desire to carry away remission and favour. (*Bishop Hall.*)

Ver. 4. What shall be the trespass offering?—*Offerings to the gods:*—The idea of presenting offerings to the gods corresponding with the object in connection with which they were presented was often given effect to by heathen nations. "Those saved from shipwreck offered pictures of the shipwreck, or of the clothes which they had on at the time, in the Temple of Isis; slaves and captives, in gratitude for the recovery of their liberty, offered chains to the Lares. retired gladiators, their arms to Hercules; and in the fifth century a custom prevailed among Christians of offering in their churches gold or silver hands, feet, eyes, etc., in return for cures effected in those members respectively in answer to prayer. This was probably a heathen custom transferred into the Christian Church, for a similar usage is still found among the heathen in India." (*Speaker's Commentary.*)

Ver. 9. It was a chance that happened to us.—*The ministry of chance:*—The world believes in chance, and without doubt there is some ground for its belief, but whether that ground constitutes a real foundation we may doubt. What does chance mean? It means that it is something which happens, falls out, without being foreseen or intended. Nothing happens unforeseen by the Great Mind that rules over all. All chance is "direction which thou canst not see;" but though we do not see it the direction was not the less there. 1. The doctrine of chance has been applied to the formation of the world. It has been said that the world is the result of the interaction of the atoms through all the past Eternity, at last falling by chance into an orderly arrangement. Let us suppose an immense number of alphabets were thrown together—a sufficient number of them, for instance, to make up the Bible, say a million of letters or so—and that some one were to be appointed to throw them up every second through a hundred million of years, is there any likelihood that they would come down once in such an order as to make the Bible, or a single book of the Bible, or a single chapter of the Bible, or a single verse? Never. Yet that is just what Lucretius supposed to happen with the making of the world from the interaction of the atoms. There must be intelligence; there must be design to elicit that which we call the world. The Greek word which we translate "world" signifies something arranged, something orderly, and hence beautiful. 2. Tendencies, that is, laws, are capable of being observed and provided for. And this is the great business of man, as Bacon observed, "Man the minister and interpreter of nature, does and understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more." That is, he is to find out just what order that is which God has given to nature, and guide himself accordingly. If things were only to fall out by chance it would be utterly impossible to foresee or to guide ourselves in view of any event. If we found that the hard brick of to-day was soft as its original clay to-morrow, and that without any perceptible reason; or the strong timber was attacked with a weakness at varying and uncertain intervals; or that the slate which threw off the rain of yesterday was become a sieve to the torrent of to-day; or that the window which was translucent had suddenly become opaque; if we could assign no reason for these sudden changes, and all other things were alike in this, we should be utterly incapable of any useful work. If the human mind were powerful enough to take in and calculate all the various forces which enter into the movements of each, it would be able to show the reasons for the slightest change in the direction and force of the wind, of the smallest fleck of the cloud, and of every flash of the aurora of the north sky, and of every variation in the health of the hypochondriac. It is yet possible that science may be able to predict what was, in former days, only possible to prophecy. 3. But it may be asked, "What do you make of a miracle? Is not that such a breach of the order and continuity of nature as would be equivalent to the intrusion of chance?" We say no, for a miracle is only the operation

of a higher law—it is only the result of the influence of the Great Mechanic, who, surely, should not be left out of our calculation of what is possible in this complex world of ours. Science should modestly admit that there may be direction which she cannot see—that there is a Providence "which shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will"—that outside the framework of nature there is an intelligent Mind, and that there may be reasons for its interference just as strong as those which operate on the factory director to mend a broken wheel or to reduce a too violent motion. This sphere, called in our imperfect vocabulary that of miracle, is far removed from that of chance, where uncertainty, doubt, and incapacity ever reign. But it may be suggested here that we should enter into some inquiry about prayer, and about its power to resist the usual order of nature, and thus, as it were, to set aside the government of law. Now, here I would say that, in connection with prayer, we must bear in mind that with its answer, in the Scriptures, the ministry of angels is closely associated. Verily, it is a poor science which takes cognizance alone of the seen and tangible, the weighable and measurable, while there are around us in the ambient ether, or within us in the recesses of the mind, the ministering spirits, "sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." But it is to be observed, that whatever is done by these ministering spirits, is done, not to the production of confusion in the world, but in entire accordance with the lower laws which science observes. To our thought there can be no disorder introduced, when the superior forces are taken into account. Let us take the case of the resurrection of Christ. Science, which took no account of the Spirit of holiness, no account of the Spirit of God with which He was filled above measure, said it was not possible that He should rise again; but the Apostle tells us, it was not possible that He should be holden of death. God was in Him with such presence and power that death was overcome, and life, violently taken away, was restored. Without the Divine power in Christ, the scientific men of the day were perfectly right in assuming the impossibility of the resurrection; but (and here is no chance, but the presence of mighty cause) they were all astray in thinking that there was no resurrection for Him. It was absolutely certain that He should rise again; there was a cause mightier than death operating to His restoration. All this is certainly according to law, as Paul says: "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." It may be observed that, at least, in those cases which have been dwelt upon by pious persons as answers to prayers, naturalists have invariably reasoned that the same results would have happened without the intervention of prayer at all—which means that they, at least, did not find that any disorder occurred by any power which prayer exercised. These interventions in answer to prayer, by angelic agency or otherwise, seem to give no reason to affirm that chance has any scope or play in the world. This being understood, we may also say a word regarding the frequency of such spiritual agency's operations. Are they of frequent, or only of casual and fitful occurrence? Were they confined to Palestine and prophetic periods, or are they in operation at all times and spheres of the world? It reply, we say, without doubt, they are always working as they are always living, and working according to law, that is, according to the direction of God. But we may surely affirm that they do not interfere with any law of nature, nor are they to be relied on in answer to any prayer offered up to guard us against calamities which we might have avoided, or which we have brought on ourselves by want of proper foresight. 4. There being no such thing, then, as chance, and no violation of the laws of matter by higher power, it is clearly our duty to know what those laws are—especially those which regulate the business, trade, profession, or calling of each. It may be that, after we have done our best, we shall still be ignorant of many things which it greatly concerns us to know, our ignorance of the same bringing to us loss, disaster, even death. But that we might, by exercising foresight, avoid great calamities is certain. One-half, two-thirds, three-fourths of the accidents that occur, destructive of life and limb, should have been avoided. Why should scaffolds be continually falling, dashing human beings to the earth shattered corpses, when a rope of sufficient thickness, or a pole of sufficient firmness, would have prevented the catastrophe? Why should the shop fall under its load, when a trifling bond would have held its walls perpendicular? Why should a house be burned, when a little care would have cured a defective flue? Why should the ship sink in the ocean, when a good look-out would have avoided collision with the iceberg or the other ship crossing the course. Be

it observed, not one of these nor similar accidents but might have been foreseen and prevented. In every case the material employed followed explicitly the laws of its own being. The falling scaffold, the sinking building, the burning city, all took place according to law. When any great disaster happens to a building, we cannot, on that account, say that Heaven is enraged against it, or that it is a judgment on it for the immoralities there nurtured. The judgment is against the folly, the perverseness, the sin of imprudence, carelessness, want of foresight, or wickedness implied in the faulty construction for the sake of gain. Say not that those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were greater sinners than the others in Jerusalem on whom no such judgment came. What we are concerned with is the vast importance of prudence and care in regard to every building where human lives might, with such provision, be imperilled. 5. But still there is one thought which it is important for us to impress upon you. Place yourselves in no peril to which duty does not call—nay, let us broaden the injunction, walk in no path to which duty does not beckon the way, though absolutely safe. We have no promise that we shall have safety save in the paths of right—nay, not even of bodily safety there. Though the outer man perish the inner man will live unhurt amid the war of elements, the wrack of matter, and the crash of worlds. (*J. Bennet, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. Lowing as they went.—*The heart going toward heaven*:—How many, many times have men gone by their tears to the gate of heaven who never could have been drawn there by the mere presentation of truth. As the kine went lowing with the ark, so the heart goes lowing toward heaven, seeking its own, and finding them, in hope, in imagination, and resting only when by faith it is brought again consciously near to them in the kingdom of the Eternal Father. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 13. And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley.—*The harvest field*:—The words of the text give a harvest scene. I. SIGNS FROM GOD. Every harvest scene is a new Divine revelation. Thousands of years have rolled away since He promised that "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not fail." In the fulfilment of that promise, how much of God is seen! 1. There is His goodness. Provision is made for man and beast. 2. There is His power. 3. There is His faithfulness. 4. There is His eternity. He who fulfils to-day in fields of ripened corn a promise made thousands of years ago, must be independent of the revolutions of times and circumstances. It is said that Dr. Johnson took off his hat whenever he passed a steeple. But he must have a dull soul who feels no reverence when walking through ripened corn-fields. In the harvest fields we see—II. LIFE FROM DEATH. The grain which the sower dropped into the soil in spring underwent the process of dissolution and death. For weeks it lay buried in the dust. All this exuberance of the harvest field has come out of apparent death. 1. It symbolises spiritual labour. The true Christian teacher, philanthropist, reformer, minister, like the husbandman, has his seed buried for a time. However, though he dies, the seed lives, and will rise, grow, and ripen to perfection. 2. This exuberance in the harvest field illustrates human life on earth. The harvest field reminds us of the true education of man. Like the seed sown, it is the bringing out of what is in the soul—the moral ego. Some teachers speak of the mind as a vessel, some as a stone. And the idea is to fill up the vessel, to polish the stone. But it is neither stone nor vessel; it is a seed. You cannot fill it, you cannot polish it. You must bring it out. Man at birth is sown into the earth, like seed, in two respects. The seed existed before it was sown. Man existed before he was born into this world. The seed required sowing in order for its development. Man required birth into this world in order for the development of his powers. As a seed, man differs from other germinant existences in two respects:—(1.) He has a self-formative power. (2.) He has boundless possibilities. In the harvest field we see—III. LIKE FROM LIKE. Each seed has come forth in its own kind. Man reaps like what he sows. 1. It is thus in spiritual things. 2. It is thus in bodily development. In the harvest field we see—IV. MUCH FROM LITTLE. Each seed is multiplied, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold. So wondrously prolific is the seed that one single grain in the course of time will cover continents. One thought has formed a character, and one character has changed the destiny of a nation. Much from little characterises all God's opera-

tions. In the harvest field we see—V. BLESSINGS FROM LABOUR. The crops would never have appeared had man not cultivated the soil and sowed the precious grain. Every harvest field is a testimony to the importance of human agency. In the harvest field we see—VI. MATURITY FROM PROGRESS. From the commencement of germination, the seed went on until it appeared in the multiplied grains of harvest. All things tend to ripeness:—1. All things in nature. 2. All things in society. 3. All classes of character. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 19, 20. **And He smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord.**—*Irreverent curiosity*:—The prying men of Beth-shemesh have had their counterparts many a time in more recent days. Many men, with strong theological proclivities, have evinced a strong desire to pry into the "secret things which belong to the Lord our God." Foreknowledge, election, free will, sin's punishment—men have often forgot that there is much in such subjects that exceeds the capacity of the human mind, and that as God has shown reserve in what He has revealed about them, so men ought to show a holy modesty in their manner of treating them. And even in the handling of sacred things generally, in the way of theological discussion, a want of reverence has very often been shown. It becomes us all most carefully to beware of abusing the gracious condescension which God has shown in His revelation, and in the use which He designs us to make of it. It was an excellent rule a foreign theologian laid down for himself, to keep up the spirit of reverence—never to speak of God without speaking to God. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Uncurbed curiosity perilous*:—Men may soon be too bold with hidden mysteries; he that modestly looks upon the sun, sees a glorious torch, and receives a comfortable light; but he that fixeth his eyes too earnestly upon it, is struck blind, and because he will see more than he should, comes in the end to see nothing at all. (*T. Adams.*) *Dangerous prying into secret things*:—He that pryeth into every cloud may be stricken with a thunderbolt. (*Eliza Cook.*) *The severity and mercy of God*:—The city of Beth-shemesh (which signifies the House of the Sun) was now under such an eclipse and darkness, as peevishly to think that God was over strict, laying the blame all upon God, and none upon their sins (ver. 20), and therefore desire to dismiss the ark as the cause of this rigour. David himself had something of this sin (II Sam. vi. 8, 9), and the Gadarians much more (Matt. viii. 54). God always shows most severity in punishing His own people, especially in matters that immediately concerned His worship, and men are not competent judges, because we understand not the unsearchable reasons of His judgments. Who hath been God's counsellor, &c? (Rom. xi. 33, 34), we ought not to search into God's secrets, which belong to Him only (Deut. xxix. 29). It is as unmannerly a trick to spy into another man's house with his eyes, as to press into it with his feet: How much more unlawful was this prying and peeping into the secrets of God, so expressly against God's Law? (Num. iv. 15, 18, 19, 20). As it is a learned ignorance not to know what is unrevealed, so it is a sort of madness to pry into them. It is a wonder that the Philistines were not all cut off (as the Beth-shemites were here, ver. 19) when they first laid their foul hands upon it, when they first took it captive; and now again, when they carted the ark (though upon a new cart), seeing the Lord made a breach upon David for his doing the very self-same thing (II Sam. vi. 3). No reason can be rendered for this severity of God against His servants, and His indulgency towards His enemies, but this, God confers greater privileges upon His own people, and therefore if they transgress against all their light and love, &c., He infers greater punishments upon them (Amos. iii. 2). David and the Beth-shemites had the light of the law of God by them, and therefore sinned more against knowledge than those poor blind ignorant Philistines could do: Therefore God did not only spare them in carting His ark, but also condescended to work this miracle for their conviction. (*C. Ness.*)

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 2. **The time was long, for it was twenty years.**—*An absent God*:—Well might it be said, "The time was long." Twenty hours, without Thy presence, are long indeed, and cloud the brightest day, and veil the loveliest scenes. How should you like to be twenty years away from your beloved father or mother? Would not the time seem very long? And have you ever mourned an absent God? Have you been like Job, when he looked on every side and found Him not? (Job xxiii. 8, 9); or, like Mary Magdalene, whose tears were her meat day and night, until she found Him whom her soul loved? See how she stands beside the empty grave! Peter may leave—John may leave—they may go to their house, or to their nets. The place where the body of Jesus had lain was sweeter and dearer to Mary than all the sweets of earth: and though her tearful eyes had too plainly told her His precious body was not there, yet again she stoops, again she looks in, as though she hoped her ardent wishes might bring Him back again. Yes, blessed woman, and they have power with thy God, and prevail. Quickly was He at her side whom she sought sorrowing: and quickly, at His presence, are tears exchanged for joy unspeakable. Happy art thou, O Israel, when thou canst mourn an absent God! We have a beautiful description given us of real, godly sorrow, in 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. If one of you were to ask a gentleman or lady to come and see you, would you sit with the cottage all in litter and confusion? would you not be tidying it, cleaning out every corner, dusting every piece of furniture, and getting it as nice as you could? Oh! when you truly cry to the Lord to return unto you, how diligent you will be preparing your hearts unto the Lord! (2 Chron. xxx. 19.) What carefulness, lest there should be anything left undone! What clearing of idols and rubbish! what indignation against the things which have usurped His place in your heart, and robbed you of all your joy! what vehement desire to see Him again filling the whole, and bringing every thought into captivity! what zeal to make up for lost time! what revenge against ungrateful, treacherous self! Would you wish to know the first step a soul takes in departing from God? You may find it in your secret chamber—beside the little bed or chair, where you once used to hold sweet communion with Him. "Thou hast restrained prayer," is the print of the first footstep in the downward road. Would you know the first step of the returning soul? Go again, and look in the secret chamber: now that distressed soul seeks Him early; and soon its youth is renewed like the eagle's—it walks, it runs, it flies (Isaiah xl. 31). (*Helen Plumptre.*)

Vers. 3—11. **And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts.**—*Samuel the Judge*:—For more than twenty years the Philistines had held undisputed sway over the greater part of the territory of Israel. Shechem and Shiloh, the ancient sanctuaries of worship, were both in the possession of the Philistines. Even the sacred ark of the covenant had been surrendered ingloriously into the hands of the uncircumcised. Restored by miracle, it still remained in the Hivite town of Kirjath-jearim upon the border. Israel was without a sanctuary as well as without a ruler. The power of the oppressor was to be broken. Deliverance was to come in the only way in which it could come, through the interposition of Divine aid. This help of God bringing deliverance is the great theme brought to our consideration. I. The help of God which brings deliverance comes **THROUGH THE AGENCY OF A PERSONAL DELIVERER**. This is the first great historical lesson of those dark days in which the judges ruled. Each of the herojudges was officially a type of the great Deliverer. In each succeeding one the personal analogies to the great Antitype become more and more apparent, until in Samuel, the last and noblest of the line, we reach one of the most illustrious types of Christ to be found in Old Testament history. II. The help which brings deliverance comes **ONLY UPON CONDITION OF SINCERE REPENTANCE FOR SIN AND WHOLE-HEARTED RETURN TO THE LORD**. Samson adventured all upon personal prowess. Conscious of extraordinary powers, he sought to annoy and intimidate the Philistines into submission. Wasting his strength in brilliant but vain exploits, a romantic life was crowned with a glorious death, yet he passed away, leaving the Philistines still in possession of the land. Samuel, tracing the miseries of the people to their true source in the chastisement of God for their sins, realising that

the first step towards disenthralment must be taken in repentance and reformation, sets himself quietly but steadfastly to work to rekindle in the hearts of his countrymen the smouldering fires of religion. At the basis of all true freedom from the Philistines that rule the heart, from the bondage of corruption, from the fetters of guilt, from the "lusts that war against the soul," is this bitter work of repentance, this putting away the idols of the soul, this turning with the whole heart to the service of the Lord. III. The help which brings deliverance comes THROUGH A COVENANT SEALED WITH BLOOD. As deliverance from Philistine bondage came only through the provision of the covenant with Abraham, as that covenant was ratified and rested in by the oppressed and suffering people, so deliverance from the bondage of Satan comes only through the provisions of the covenant of grace, as that covenant is sealed with the blood of Christ and joyfully accepted and rested in by the sin-oppressed soul. IV. The help which brings deliverance comes in ANSWER TO PRAYER. The Church of God has never yet tasted to its full extent the power of prayer. It is Samuel's memorial that he is (Ps. xcix. 6) "among them that call upon God's name," who "called upon the Lord, and he answered them." Luther, Knox, Whitefield, Wesley, the men who carried forth great movements and accomplished glorious works for God, have been men pre-eminent in prayer. V. The help which brings deliverance comes in THE USE OF APPOINTED MEANS. Not when the first alarm was sounded, and the people, started by the unexpected assault, "were afraid of the Philistines," did the Lord appear, but when Samuel, going calmly forward with the sacrifice in the face of the advancing enemy, had shown the sincerity of his trust in God—when the hosts of Israel, drawing inspiration from the faith of their dauntless leader, had set the battle in array and were making use of all available means of defence. In all our conflicts with Satan, the world and sin, help comes from God, but only as direct effort is put forth by us. It comes to give efficiency and success to our efforts. We may not sit idle and wait for some marvellous interposition of God's power. We may not first do our part in our own strength and then wait for God to do His. It is in and through our working that Divine power is put forth and Divine help given. We "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. VI. The help which brings victory in the first conflict is the PLEDGE, TO BE GRATEFULLY RECOGNISED, OF COMPLETE AND FINAL DELIVERANCE. VII. The help which brings deliverance ENGAGES TO THE LIFELONG SERVICE OF HIM WHO SO GRACIOUSLY INTERPOSES FOR OUR RELIEF. Each mercy received should be a silken cord binding more closely to the service of God. Instead of presuming upon gracious interpositions in the past as occasions for indulgence or inaction in the present, we should find in these both incentive and encouragement to steady progress and patient labour in the Christian life. (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *An ideal statesman*:—The words "twenty years" should be connected with the following sentence, "and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Thus twenty years had elapsed before they began to revive from their sad state of religious decline. "And Samuel spake." Now Samuel appears upon the scene. He has been absent since the third chapter. But now he is seen with all the energy of spiritual fortitude, consequent upon deep devotion, trying to excite in other hearts the aspiration of his own. Such an occasion is worthy of his presence, and in the sequel we have at once presented the power and praise of a devoted life. We have here before us a pattern statesman. I. HE WAS A MAN OF SPIRITUAL DISPOSITION. It generally happens that the leading spirits of a nation are those famous for philosophical thought, scientific discovery, or political revolution. The problem may be atheistic, the analysis anti-Christian, and the social change debasing, yet, because the man has by some marvellous display of genius flashed his name into the bewildered eyes of an astonished world, he is called to eminence. Thus national prominence is attained by the sheer force of mind power, irrespective of character, and while life is so commercial in its tendency and so secular in its habit we must expect such to continue. This was not the case under the old Jewish theocracy. Samuel, the central figure of these times, was raised to authority, not by mere thought power, but by the intense spirituality of his character. The spirituality of Samuel's disposition is manifested—I. By his expostulation with the people (ver. 3). This expostulation contains (1.) A supposition. "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts." In this crisis Samuel does not suggest a series of civil enactments, or a great military stratagem, as calculated to obtain freedom, but pene-

trating to the deepest source of defeat, urges a return to God. The civilised statesmen of to-day may laugh at this primitive mode of government, and write, with sarcastic dash, "superstition" on its wish, but might they not learn a lesson from its success: that political woes are often to be remedied by moral reform, not by the mock contrition of place-seeking miscreants, but by the devout penitence of guilt-stricken spirits. (2.) Instruction. "Put away the strange gods." Samuel thus places a recognition of Jehovah at the basis of all national reform. Idolatry has proved the overthrow of many kingdoms. Are not wealth, pleasure, fame our Penates? If so, let us heed the voice of Samuel. "Put away," &c. (3.) An assurance. "And He will deliver you" (ver. 3). (4.) It was timely. "Then all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." (5.) It was successful (ver. 4). 2. By his supplication to the Apostate nation. (1.) Convention. "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh" (ver. 5). A universal humiliation was requisite. It was celebrated:—(1.) By prayer. "I will pray for you." How calm and dignified was this language. (2.) By fasting (ver. 6). (3.) By penitent joy. "And drew water and poured it out before the Lord." Some have thought this a ceremony belonging to legal purification, or an expression of deep humiliation or of expiation, but it is possible that they poured out this water in token of joy, as they were accustomed to do at the Feast of Tabernacles. (4.) By sacrifice (ver. 9). 3. By his strict recognition of God. This is observable:—(1.) In the ordinary life of the nation. He tells them to put away the strange gods. (2.) In important national crises. "The Lord hath helped us." The victory led to:—(1.) Retrospection. "Hitherto." And what a long string of events does that represent—what contingencies—what sorrows—what joys? The whole of their past lives was crowded into one word! (2.) Perpetuation. "Took a stone." (3.) Ministration. "Hath helped us." Here we behold the strength of Samuel's character. He was one against a nation. He had force of will to resist the tide of wrong, and to bid it recede. II. SUCH CHARACTER MAY HOPEFULLY ANTICIPATE THE CO-OPERATION OF HEAVEN. "But the Lord thundered" (ver. 10). Samuel, the holy legislator, was the connecting link between God and help. How dependent is human life upon leading powers! 1. A religious assembly mistaken for a national army (ver. 7). Now the Philistines draw near for battle. This is a typical incident; the effort of moral improvement necessarily excites opposition, either the sneer of forsaken friendship, the persecution of sects, or the enmity of Satan. 2. The surprised worshippers. (1.) They were timorous. "Afraid" (ver. 7). Causes of their fear. They were without means of defence. They were conscious that past sin had enfeebled their national prowess. The discipline of extremity developed their reformed character. (2.) They were victorious. We have here illustrated the inherent power which is to be found in an assembly convened for religious exercises: such an association of contrite souls possesses some mysterious influence which almost naturally draws God into its life, and such allegiance is potent for any conflict. The issues of victory. (1.) Subjugation of enemies (ver. 13). (2.) Restoration of territory (ver. 14). 3. In the elevation of spiritual character, we have a guarantee for the execution of justice. "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" (ver. 15). 4. Home the sanctuary of public life. (1.) Samuel's return (ver. 17). 2. Samuel's devotion. "He built an altar unto the Lord." If a man is to be influential abroad, he must be devotional at home. True public life catches its inspiration from the domestic altar. Lessons:—(1.) The practical influence of one holy life upon a nation. (2.) National humiliations are acceptable to God. (3.) God's mercy illustrated in the victories of life. (4.) That public life should have its altar of devotion. (J. S. Ezell, M.A.) *Samuel the Judge*:—The interval between the time of the Judges and the time of David is filled by the history of Samuel. His influence it was that safely led the nation through two revolutions—the one in religion, the other in government. A priest, yet Samuel was the first of a new spiritual order that was henceforth to be greater than the priesthood, far more directly the mouthpiece of God, more authoritative, the true leader of the people. If steadfast and unflinching service to the people, if fearlessness and faithfulness, if unfailing goodness and wise guidance can entitle any hero in Israel to stand beside Moses and Elijah, that man surely is Samuel. Yet in addition to these two offices, priest and prophet—the greatest that any man can fill—he is also Judge of Israel, that is, king in all but name, and in all but the outward trappings and personal advantages. "Samuel was one of those great men of manifold gifts and functions whom God raises up in great crises and for

great services. He was not like Moses, the founder of the economy, nor like Elijah, its restorer. But he was its preserver through a revolution that had become inevitable; which he opposed as long as he could, which he reluctantly accepted when he could oppose it no longer, and which by sheer force of character he regulated and moulded so as to prevent national disorganisation. Like Luther, he built the new foundations on the old. As far as circumstances permitted he reformed his age, and by his genius, his piety, and his wisdom he powerfully controlled the turbulent elements of the national life." It is interesting to trace the analogy between John the Baptist and Samuel. There is a striking similarity in the circumstances of their birth, in their early separation to the service of God, in the rumour that spreads concerning them throughout the land, awakening the expectation of a great religious revival. Each of them marks a transition period in the history of Israel. Samuel is the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, as John the Baptist is the last of the prophets and the first of Christian preachers, standing and crying, "Behold, the Lamb of God." Each of them commences his work by summoning the people to a great national act of repentance before God, and in each case the symbol of their repentance has a singular similarity. We must remember that it was no light and easy work which was thus demanded of them. Idolatry was not a mere perverse fancy; nor was it only a selfish indulgence. It was the severance from all the association with those about them, the setting of themselves up to be the peculiar people of God—a thing that always costs as much effort and courage as most things a man has to do. The national repentance is followed by a great national assembly. Samuel bade the head men and representatives come together for a holy convocation in Mizpeh. By contact with himself and by communion with one another he would lead the people further in this work of reformation. As long afterwards the repentance of Israel found its expression in coming to John for baptism in the Jordan, so here they gathered together solemnly to confess their sins and to declare their purpose of amendment. Samuel bowed before the Lord in prayer for the people, whilst they "drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and said, We have sinned against the Lord." Like the symbol of baptism, it was the token of their death and burial unto sin, that they might rise into the new life of God. It is thus that the wise woman of Tekoa spake to the king, "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." Standing beside the altar high up on Mizpeh, the watch-tower, Samuel stretched up his arms to Heaven pleading for the people. Swiftly the black clouds gathered, as if the great artillery of God came forth to the fight. Whatever the manifestation may have been, whether or not attended by an earthquake, as Josephus asserts, it is certain that the Philistines never lost the dread memory of that praying figure on the lonely heights, with hands uplifted to the God of Heaven. That one man was mightier than all their hosts. It seemed as if he were able to open the windows of heaven, and summon all its force against the foes of Israel. "They came no more into the coasts of Israel." (*M. G. Pearse*.) *Solitary power*:—As prophet of the Lord, Samuel's will was supreme—all the main features of the history derive their expression from the spirit of Samuel. There is authority in his word, there is inspiration in his encouragement, there is death in his frown. Under these circumstances you see how naturally we are led to meditate upon the profound influence of one life.

I. IN THE FIRST PLACE, LOOK AT THE SUBLIME ATTITUDE WHICH SAMUEL ASSUMED IN RELATION TO THE CORRUPTION OF THE FAITH. Samuel distinctly charged the house of Israel with having gone astray from the living God. Distinctly, without reservation, without anything that indicated timidity on his part, he laid this terrible indictment against the house of Israel. In doing so he assumed a sublime attitude. He stood before Israel as a representative of the God who had been insulted, dishonoured, abandoned. We find sublimity in the attitude, imperial force in the tone. How did Samuel's influence come to be so profound upon this occasion? The instant answer is, Because his influence is moral. Moral influence goes to the heart of things. He who deals with moral questions deals with the life of the world. Any other influence addresses itself to affairs of the moment; all other influences are superficial and transitory. He who repronounces God's commandments, and tells to the heart of the world God's charges, wields a moral, and therefore a profound influence. Herein is the supreme advantage of the Gospel. The Gospel of Christ lays its saving hand upon the human heart and says, "This is the sphere of my mission. I will affect all things that are

superficial and local and temporary; but I shall affect them indirectly. By putting the life right, I shall put the extremities right; by making the heart as it ought to be, the whole surface of nature will become healthful and beautiful." We need men in society who stand apart from the little fights, petty controversies, and angry contentions which seem to be part and parcel of daily life, and who shall speak great principles, breathe a heavenly influence, and bring to bear upon combatants of all kinds considerations which shall survive all their misunderstandings. Regard Samuel in this light, and you will see the sublimity of his attitude. Herein, again, is the great influence of a moral teacher, a revealer of Christian truth. Whenever we hear a preacher who speaks the right word, we hear God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; through his voice we hear the testimony of the angels unfallen; out of his words there comes the declaration of all that is bright, pure, true, wise, in the universe of God!

II. NOW LET US LOOK AT THE HOLY ATTITUDE WHICH SAMUEL ASSUMED IN RELATION TO THE GUILT OF ISRAEL. In the first instance he describes the corruptness of the case, points out the right course, exhorts the people to take that course instantly, and then he speaks these healing words: "If ye will do these things, and gather yourselves together to Mizpah, I will pray unto the Lord for you." That is all we can do for one another—the work of an instrument, the ministry of an agent. "I will pray for you unto the Lord." Then the human needs the Divine. We never find—taking great breadths of history, ages and centuries—that the human has been able to exist alone, and to grow upward and onward in its atheism, What became of the Philistines? Now that Israel is getting its old heart back again, and its eyes are being turned to the heavens, what becomes of the Philistines? The Lord thundered that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel. The Philistines came against a praying army. We must consider not what the praying army did in the first instance, but what God did. Observe when it was that Samuel said he would pray for the house of Israel. The great lesson here turns upon a point of time. When Israel returned unto the Lord with all their heart; when Israel put away the strange Gods and Ashtaroth; when Israel prepared the heart unto the Lord and was ready to serve him only; when Israel had done this part, then Samuel said, "I will pray for you unto the Lord." Under other circumstances prayer would have been wasted breath. We find a great law here, which applies to the natural and the spiritual. Is there a plague in the city? Purify your sanitary arrangements, cleanse your drains, disinfect your channels, use everything that is at all likely to conduce to a good end—then pray unto the Lord. After nature has exhausted herself, there may be something for the Lord to do, may there not? Sometimes worldly people say—"Pray for us." Men have said that to us. What kind of men were they? Sometimes men who have made wrecks of themselves, who have gone as far devilward as they could get, whose hearts were like a den of unclean beasts, men who had no longer any grip of the world—the whole thing was slipping away from them—they have said to the minister whom they had previously characterised as a canting parson, "Pray for us." But one condition must be forthcoming on their part. There must be self-renunciation, contrition, moral anguish, pain of the soul, repentance towards God. When these conditions are forthcoming, the servant of Christ may say, "I will pray for you unto the Lord." III. IN THE THIRD PLACE, LOOK AT THE EXALTED ATTITUDE WHICH SAMUEL ASSUMES IN RELATION TO HIS WHOLE LIFETIME. We read in the fifteenth verse of this chapter, "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." Think of being able to account for all the days of a whole human history! Think of being able to write your biography in one sentence! Think of being able to do without parentheses, footnotes, reservations, apologies, and self-vindications! When we attempt to write our lives, there is so much to say that is collateral and modifying in its effect—so much which is to explain the central line. So our biographical record becomes anomalous, contradictory, irreconcilable. Here is a man whose lifetime is gathered up in one sentence. "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." We have seen him in his childhood, we have had glances of him as he was passing up to his mature age. To-day we see him in three impressive and remarkable attitudes. His whole history is in this sentence: He was a judge of God all his days. Think of giving a whole lifetime to God. There are those who cannot do that now. But young men may be able to give twenty, thirty, perhaps fifty years all to Christ. See then the profound influence which may be exerted by one life. We are dealing with Samuel, and with

Samuel alone. Samuel's life is not confined to himself; it is a radiating life, streaming out from itself and touching thousands of points in the social and national life of others. Who can tell what may be done by one man? Speak the truth of God, and eternity itself cannot exhaust the happy effect of that blessed influence! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Samuel the Judge*:—This scene at Mizpeh, and the results following, suggest several lessons. We learn that: I. ONE, TO HAVE POWER OVER MEN, MUST HAVE POWER WITH GOD. Why are the people, though late in their repentance, now so willing to listen to the prophet's words and obey them? Samuel influenced the people, because God influenced him. The secret of his power over men was his power with God. In a preëminent degree, this prophet and judge of Israel was a man to whom unseen realities were brought near. Thus, God fitted Samuel to do a work in Israel in the transition period between the theocracy and monarchy, making him an eminent judge, the first in the regular succession of prophets, the founder of the prophetic schools, the anointer of Israel's first and second king, and the man whom the people—even when debauched by idolatry—reverenced, and whose voice was to them like the voice of God. He was all this, because he held close intercourse with Heaven. The hand that is outstretched to save, must clasp the throne. Ministers are weak in the pulpit whenever they are weak in the closet. II. THE NECESSITY AND VALUE OF RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES, RIGHTLY USED. It was not enough that Samuel assemble Israel at Mizpeh. Gathered there, the people must be so influenced that the impressions made would be permanent, and they fixed in their new attitude of loyalty to God. Samuel must instruct them in the proper use of religious rites, and show them how God can be so approached as to win His favour. Thus, far back at Mizpeh, were taught the truths of Calvary. God is approached reverently, with confession, with sacrifice, and with supplication. These two ways of approaching God—Samuel's with sacrifice and supplication, and Israel's of bearing aloft the ark with heedless shoutings—teach us lessons respecting the methods by which, now, God is, and is not, appropriately worshipped. Not by magnifying the outward, by giving prominence to the seen and the tangible, while the unseen and spiritual are lightly esteemed. The value of religious ordinances consists not in what man's eye sees or his ear hears, but in what his heart feels, and in what the eye of God perceives within the breast. No wonder that Israel, thus addressing the Throne of Grace, were prevalent over their foes. God heard their cry, and the arm of Omnipotence was their defence. What though the Philistines, or Israel, or the prophet himself, could not answer the question how God at that moment put a voice into the arching heavens, or kindled up the clouds with electric fires? What though, then as well as now, and now as well as then, the philosophy of prayer baffles finite skill? Is it, therefore, any the less true that the prayer of penitence and faith prevails with God? One other element now is needed to make the worship complete—that is, an expression of thanksgiving. It was a fitting sequel, therefore, when Samuel "took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." We learn, therefore, that expressed gratitude to God should find a prominent place in all our worship. Israel not only felt grateful, they gave it utterance; they clothed with form the sentiments their hearts felt. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Repentance and Victory*:—I. PREPARATION FOR VICTORY IN REPENTANCE AND RETURN. At the time of the first fight at Eben-ezer, Israel was full of idolatry and immorality. Then their preparation for battle was the mere bringing the ark into the camp, as if it were a fetish or magic charm. That was pure heathenism, and they were idolaters in such worship of Jehovah, just as much as if they had been bowing to Baal. Not the name of the deity, but the spirit of the worshipper, makes the "idolater." How different the second preparation! If we are to have His strength infused for victory, we must cast away our idols, and come back to Him with all our hearts. The hands that would clasp Him, and be upheld by the clasp, must be emptied of trifles. To yield ourselves wholly to God is the secret of strength. Confession breaks the entail of sin, and substitutes for the dreary expectation of its continuance the glad conviction of forgiveness and cleansing. It does not make a stiff fight unnecessary; for assured freedom from sin is not the easy prize of confession, but the hard-won issue of sturdy effort in God's strength. But it is like blowing the trumpet of revolt—it gives the signal for and itself begins the conflict. The night before the battle should be spent, not in feasting, but in prayer and lowly

shriving of our souls before the great Confessor. Our enemy is strong, and no fault is more fatal than an underestimate of his power. If we go into battle singing, we shall probably come out of it weeping, or never come out at all. We should think much of our foes and little of ourselves. Such a temper will lead to caution, watchfulness, wise suspicion, vigorous strain of all our little power, and, above all, it will send us to our knees to plead with our great Captain and Advocate.

II. VICTORY ON THE FIELD OF FORMER DEFEAT. The battle is joined on the old field. Strategic considerations probably determined the choice of the ground, as they did the many battles on the plain of Esdraelon, for instance, or on the fields of the Netherlands. At all events, there they were, face to face once more on the old spot. On both sides might be men who had been in the former engagement. Depressing remembrances or burning eagerness to wipe out the shame would stir, in those on the one side; contemptuous remembrances of the ease with which the last victory had been won would animate the other. God himself helped them by the thunder-storm, the solemn roll of which was "the voice of the Lord" answering Samuel's prayer. "They were smitten *before*," not *by*, the victors. The true victor was God. The story gives boundless hope of victory, even on the fields of our former defeats. We can master rooted faults of character, and overcome temptations which have often conquered us. So, though the whole field may be strewn with relics, eloquent of former disgrace, we may renew the struggle with confidence that the future will not always copy the past. We are saved by hope; by hope we are made strong. It is the very helmet on our heads. The warfare with our own evils should be waged in the assurance that every field of our defeat shall one day see set up on it the trophy of, not our victory, but God's in us.

III. GRATEFUL COMMEMORATION OF VICTORY. Where that gray stone stands no man knows to-day, but its name lives for ever. This trophy bore no vaunts of leader's skill or soldier's bravery. One name only is associated with it. It is "the stone of help," and its message to succeeding generations is: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." That "hitherto" is the word of a mighty faith. It includes as parts of one whole the disaster no less than the victory. The Lord was helping Israel no less by sorrow and oppression than by joy and deliverance. The defeat which guided them back to Him was tender kindness and precious help. Such remembrance has in it a half-uttered prayer and hope for the future. Memory passes into hope, and the radiance in the sky behind throws light on to our forward path. God's "hitherto" carries "henceforward" wrapped up in it. The devout man's "gratitude" is, and ought to be, "a lively sense of favours to come." The best use of memory is to mark more plainly than it could be seen at the moment the Divine help which has filled our lives. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*)

Repentance and revival:—There are two great services for God and for Israel in which we find Samuel engaged in the first nine verses of this chapter. 1. In exhorting and directing them with a view to bring them into a right state before God. 2. This being accomplished, in praying for them in their time of trouble, and obtaining Divine help when the Philistines drew near in battle. 1. In the course of time the people appear to have come to feel how sad and desolate their national life was without any tokens of God's presence and grace "All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." These symptoms of repentance, however, had not shown themselves in a very definite or practical form. Now the putting away of the strange gods and Ashtaroth was a harder condition than we at first should suppose. Some are inclined to fancy that it was a mere senseless and ridiculous obstinacy that drew the Israelites so much to the worship of the idolatrous gods of their neighbours. In reality the temptation was of a much more subtle kind. Their religious worship as prescribed by Moses had little to attract the natural feelings of the human heart. It was simple, it was severe, it was self-denying. The worship of the pagan nations was more lively and attractive. Fashionable entertainments and free-and-easy revelries were superadded to please the carnal mind. To put away Baalim and Ashtaroth was to abjure what was fashionable and agreeable, and fall back on what was unattractive and sombre. Was it not, too, an illiberal demand? No. If the people were in earnest now, they must show it by putting away every image and every object and ornament that was connected with the worship of other gods. But the people were in earnest; and this first demand of Samuel was complied with. Then the first steps towards revival and communion must be the forsaking of these sins, and of ways of life that prepare the way for them. It is not enough that

in church, or at some meeting, or in our closet, we experience a painful conviction how much we have offended God, and a desire not to offend Him in like manner any more. We must "prepare our hearts" for this end. We must remember that in the world with which we mingle we are exposed to many influences that remove God from our thoughts, that stimulate our infirmities, that give force to temptation, that lessen our power of resistance, that tend to draw us back into our old sins. Having found the people so far obedient to his requirements, Samuel's next step was to call an assembly of all Israel to Mizpeh. It is important to mark the stress which is laid here on the public assembly of the people. When Samuel convened the people to a public assembly, he evidently did it on the principle on which in the New Testament we are required not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. It is in order that the presence of people like-minded, and with the same earnest feelings and purposes, may have a rousing and warming influence upon us. The next scene in the panorama of the text is—the Philistines invading Israel. Here Samuel's service is that of an intercessor, praying for his people, and obtaining God's blessing. The Israelites knew where their help was to be found, and recognising Samuel as their mediator, they said to him, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." With this request Samuel most readily complies. But first he offers a sucking lamb as a whole burnt-offering to the Lord, and only after this are we told that "Samuel cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him." The lesson is supremely important. When sinners approach God to entreat His favour, it must be by the new and living way, sprinkled with atoning blood. All other ways of access will fail. Luther humbles himself in the dust and implores God's favour, and struggles with might and main to reform his heart; but Luther cannot find peace until he sees how it is in the righteousness of another he is to draw nigh and find the blessing—in the righteousness of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

An Old Testament revival:—I. IN THE BEGINNING A SERMON WAS PREACHED. A crisis had been reached; and in his searching and solemn discourse Samuel seems to have sought to make these four points, which certainly are worthy of employment always: 1. Those people must admit the necessity of a new departure in their conduct and life immediately; they must "return unto the Lord with all their hearts." 2. They must put away every sign and vestige of a bad past; "strange gods" would have to be entirely relinquished. 3. They must instantly enter upon a fresh spiritual consecration: they would have to "prepare their hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only." 4. Then they must trust wholly to the ancient promises God had made to their fathers and to them; for He had covenanted to "deliver them out of the hands of" their foes. *II. THEN FOLLOWED AN EXEMPLARY RESPONSE FROM THE NATION:* "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." This sudden and thorough cleansing of themselves from forms of idolatry reminds us of what in Britain used to be called "a reformation of manners." *III. NEXT THEIR LEADER SUMMONED A GREAT ASSEMBLAGE FOR A RELIGIOUS SERVICE OF PRAYER.* *IV. NOW COMES WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED A PROTRACTED MEETING.* There is always a point at which human mediation in behalf of sinners must cease; then the sinners must take up the duty of supplication for themselves, or be lost. This was true of even such a prophet-priest as Samuel (*Jer. 15. 1*): "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people: cast them out of my sight and let them go forth." In this case the people were intelligent enough to undertake at least these four duties which are mentioned. 1. They came to a direct posture of humiliation; they "fasted on that day." 2. Then these people made confessions of sin: they "said there, We have sinned against the Lord." 3. Next, these repenting people soberly renewed their covenant: "They drew water, and poured it out before the Lord." One of the Targums renders the clause thus: "And they poured out their hearts in penitence as waters before the Lord." Gill says: "This signified that they thoroughly renounced idolatry, that nothing of it should remain, as when water is poured out of a cask there remains no smell, as there does when other liquors are poured out." 4. They put themselves into condition for fresh activity in devotion. The best explanation of that statement, "Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh," seems to be that he reorganised the people afresh, for military service and for civil order and for religious worship. *V. THEN THERE CAME THE DESCENT OF BLESSING IN FULFILMENT OF THE LORD'S COVENANT.* 1. Real

consecration of Christians generally evokes new opposition from foes. 2. Importunate prayer is the condition of all success. 3. The full consecration of one's soul must recognise the sacrifice for sins. This lamb was the suggestion of atonement made by a Redeemer. 4. God is faithful to the instant in His interposition. VI. THERE REMAINED NOW NOTHING MORE THAN TO ERECT A MEMORIAL OF THE TRANSACTION. 1. All glory and honour of the achievement should be distinctly ascribed to God: "The Lord hath helped us." 2. We should make our acknowledgment as permanent as possible. Samuel chose stone; so did Jacob (Gen. 28, 18). 3. We should take pains to group our memorials so that one shall strengthen the other. Samuel set up his pillar between Mizpeh, where this deliverance was vouchsafed, and Shen, where another had been vouchsafed in the victory gained over the Philistines twenty years before. Thus he linked the histories together, like pearls in a necklace. 4. Each successive deliverance by a gracious God should deepen our trust and quicken our expectation. The careful investigation of such an incident as this has given us certain conclusions which might well be stated at the close of our study now. 1. A revival of religion is located in the church, and assumes a previous state of sad and guilty backsliding. 2. The conversion of sinners is not a revival; it is the gracious result that follows one which is genuine. 3. Any "measures" are allowable, provided they are decent and orderly that will lead believers to penitence and duty. 4. Blessed is the congregation whose spirituality is lifted and whose life is saved by a day of God's visitation. 5. More blessed still is that church which never had a revival in all its history, and never needed one. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *A city changed by a revival*:—When that worst of the Popes, Alexander VI., occupied the Papal chair, about the end of the fifteenth century, the preaching of Savonarola at Florence might well cause such alarm among Pope and Cardinals at headquarters as to ensure the silencing and martyrdom of the preacher. What was the effect of his preaching in Florence in 1495? The aspect of the city was completely changed. The women threw aside their jewels and finery, dressed plainly, and bore themselves demurely; licentious young Florentines were transformed as by magic into sober, religious men; hymns took the place of Lorenzo's carnival songs. All prayed frequently, flocked to the churches, and gave largely to the poor. Most wonderful of all, bankers and tradesmen were impelled by scruples of conscience to restore illgotten gains, amounting to many thousand florins. All men were wonderstruck by this singular and almost miraculous change; and, notwithstanding the shattered state of his health, Savonarola must have been deeply rejoiced to see his people converted to so Christian a mode of life. *Disaster aids repentance*:—When men have suffered sorely as a consequence of their misdoing, or of their lack, they are very likely to strive with earnestness to guard against a recurrence of such disaster. There is no time when it is safer to travel over a great railway line, than just after a collision through the carelessness of a switchman or a train-starter. And while the whole country is shocked at the loss of life and property through the giving way of an imperfectly constructed dam, there will be reasonable care in the inspection and in the building of dams. It is perfectly natural, therefore, that the people of Israel, who had suffered defeat because of the misuse of the ark of the Lord by those who were set to guard it, should be ready to bring it again to a fitting place, and to set apart a fitting person to guard it sacredly. It is better to try to do well after a great disaster than not to try at all; but how much better than all it is to do well from the beginning. (H. C. Trumbull.) *Returning to lost experiences*:—A man upon the way, having accidentally lost his purse, is questioned by his fellow-traveller where he had it last. "Oh!" says he, "I am confident that I drew it out of my pocket when I was in such a town, at such an inn." "Why, then!" says the other, "there is no better way to have it again than by going back to the place where you last had it." This is the case of many a man in these loose, unsettled times; they have lost their love to Christ, and His truth, since their corn and wine and oil have increased; since outward things are in abundance added unto them they have slighted the light of God's countenance. When they were poor and naked of all worldly comfort, then they sought God's face both early and late, and nothing was more dear and precious unto them than the truth of Christ. What, then, is to be done to recover this lost love to Christ? Back again, back again directly where you last had it! Back to the sign of the broken and contrite heart! There it was that you drew it out into good words and better works; and though it be since lost in the crowd of

worldly employments, there and nowhere else, you shall be sure to find it again. (*J. Spencer.*) *Three decisive steps*:—I. First, then, **THESE PEOPLE WERE IN A VERY HOPEFUL CONDITION.** "All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." What does it mean? 1. It means that they were greatly oppressed. Their goods were taken from them. They were beaten. They saw their children slain. They were the slaves of the Philistines. 2. I think that, by the house of Israel lamenting after the Lord, is meant, next, that they began to be inwardly convinced that nobody could help them but the Lord. 3. It seems to me that, while they desired Him, they were afraid that He would not deliver them. They prayed after a fashion, but there was a dash of doubt about it. 4. Moreover, these people had very little hope, but they had very much desire. 5. If you read the third verse, you will see that, all this while, they had not parted with their idols. They lamented after the Lord, but they did not get the Lord, because they wanted to have the Lord and to have their idols, too. John Bunyan tells us that, when he was playing at the game of "cat" one Sunday, on Elstow Green, as he was going to strike the cat with his stick, he thought he heard a voice crying, "Wilt thou keep thy sins, and go to hell; or wilt thou give up thy sins, and go to heaven?" That question, without an angel's voice, you may hear at this moment. I put it now to some of you who would like to keep your sins, and yet go to heaven. You lament after the Lord. You would be a saint; but then you want to be a sinner, too. It is useless lamenting after the Lord, if it does not lead you to give up your idols. 6. It meant that they could never rest till God returned. Some of you have tried many ways to get rest. Some years ago you got harpooned at a meeting; and though, like a big whale, you have dragged out miles of line, and gone to the bottom of the sea of sin, the harpoon sticks in you still. I know what you have been doing to get rest. You have tried the world, and now there is nothing there that pleases you. I wonder what you will try next. Will you try dissipation? Will you try drunkenness? Will you try the use of drugs? Well; if God means to save you, you will never rest till you are anchored in the port of Christ's atoning sacrifice. I sometimes hear of persons getting very angry after a gospel sermon, and I say to myself, "I am not sorry for it." Sometimes when we are fishing, the fish gets the hook into his mouth. He pulls hard at the line: if he were dead, he would not; but he is a live fish, worth the getting; and though he runs away for a while, with the hook in his jaws, he cannot escape. His very wriggling and his anger show that he has got the hook, and the hook has got him. Have the landing-net ready; we shall land him by-and-by. Give him more line; let him spend his strength, and then we will land him, and he shall belong to Christ for ever. II. **THESE PEOPLE WERE CALLED UPON TO TAKE THREE VERY DECIDED STEPS.** 1. The first thing that they were to do was to "put away the strange gods." Every man seems to have a different idol. One has pride: he is so wonderfully good, so self-righteous; he has never done anything wrong. He is quite as good as a Christian, and rather better. Another man's god is his self-confidence. Hear him talk. He understands everything; he does not need to be taught anything; and if there is anything in the Bible that he does not understand, why, then he does not believe it. 2. Now, notice the next step of decision: "Put away the strange gods, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord." The mere outward reformation was not enough. They might have torn down every idol in the land, and have been no nearer God for that. See, in France to-day, how the people who have for so long bent the knee in superstition and idolatry, have, many of them, flung away their vain worship, only to sink into infidelity. What better are they, when they exalt the "Goddess of Reason" where before stood the altars of the Papacy, when the heart is untouched, and God is not in all their thoughts? Still, there are many in that land, as I trust, there are many here, who are lamenting after God, and only await the preparation of the heart, which comes from Him, to bow in allegiance before His throne. What, then, is the way to prepare the heart? The first thing is, confession of sin. Then resolve in your soul that you will quit these sins. Then there must be much prayer; for so it was with these people. Cry mightily unto God: "Lord, save me!" Remember, too, that there must be trust, or else the heart is not rightly prepared. Then, break away from the world. 3. That is the next step, the service of God: "Serve him only," said Samuel. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." III. **THEY WERE HELPED TO DO ALL THIS BY HAVING FAITH.** It was faith in Samuel, as we have already noticed. You can be much more helped, yea,

graciously enabled, if you have faith in Christ. 1. They believed Samuel's word. 2. These people believed chiefly in Samuel's prayers. 3. The people had faith in Samuel's sacrifice. 4. Israel also accepted Samuel's rule. The Lord help you to believe in God incarnate, in God making sacrifice for sin, in Jesus dead, buried, risen, ascended, sitting at the right hand of God, and soon to come in glory! Let him enter your life, and dwelling in your heart, judge your every action, and rule over your entire life. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The revival*:—Revivals of religion have been the blessed experience of the Church in every era of its living history. At Bochim, in the early age of the Judges, a great revival took place. In the days of Samuel the Church of God was gladdened by another. Hezekiah's reign was greatly signalized by the general revival of religion; so was Josiah's. The nation of Judah was preserved from idolatry by means of these great awakenings. In the time of the building of the second temple there was a revival of religion which wrought most influentially. Pentecost stands prominent in the history of revivals. Ordinances and means of grace may have been performed in dull routine, but they were "Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null." But when times of refreshing came, the power of the Spirit was felt. Two features have generally marked these periods of spiritual awakening—the power of prayer, and the power of preaching. Prayer then recovers its unction, its wrestling, and its efficacy. It may be that a few only are found seeking one thing—the renewing of God's work; but these are in earnest—they pray in faith, in the Holy Ghost, and in expectation of the blessing. Ere Pentecost occurred, the company of the believing were much in prayer. It was so in a remarkable degree in the eighteenth century. In such seasons preaching has been with power. The preachers were awakened, and spake their word with boldness and freedom, and in expectation of success. We need only to name Baxter and Doolittle, Alleine and Flavel, of the Puritan age, whose ministry was largely blessed; Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Shephard, and Tennant, of America, who scarcely ever preached without success; Wesley and Whitefield, and their coadjutors in England; William Burns, and Robert M'Cheyne, and Asahel Nettleton, of our own time. These all were men radiant with godliness, burning with earnestness, untiring in labour, and singularly clear and pointed in their enunciation of the gospel. They were instruments of reviving. The revival under Samuel was brought about by prayer and preaching. To this man it was instrumentally to be traced. He wrestled in secret and exhorted in public; waited for the blessing, and, under God, led the blessed revival. When the ark of God was taken, and Ichabod became the fittest name of Israel, the cause of godliness was deplorably low. Form, which had for a time supplanted faith, at length departed with the ark. God in great mercy taught them that form was unavailing without living piety. Had the victory remained with the Hebrews at Ebenezer, the ark of God would have been made an idol, and the ordinances of a divine religion been corrupted into heathenism. But its capture was permitted, even though that disgraced the religion of the people, rather than this danger should he incurred. When the ark was restored to Israel the chosen people were not prepared to convey it again to Shiloh. The men of Bethshemesh, after their first enthusiasm and sacrifice were over, felt no more interest than an idle curiosity, and presumed to inspect that which had been commanded to be covered from all but the high priest's eyes. And, though so many perished by the hand of God for their sacrilege, no spirit of repentance and reformation moved the people. The Bethshemites are not without their parallels. Unfeeling souls may be met with everywhere. Mercy and judgment move them not. Grace and law melt them not. They can hear the pleadings of incarnate Love suffering to save, and never wish a personal interest in His benign salvation. The Bethshemites besought the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim to take away the ark of God; but when this was done there does not seem to have been a single priest in attendance to welcome the holy symbol or to deposit it within the tabernacle. During twenty years the children of Israel forgot their God and Redeemer, and they were perverted by their foul idolatries. Apostasy from God never improves the soul. False worship cannot elevate. Israel did not recover their independence or their happiness until they were as a people brought back to God. This was the great object of the reformation under Samuel. 1. Samuel preached repentance. This has ever been the subject of earnest exhortation in times of attempted revival. It rang through Germany by Luther's lips of music, and echoed among the Alpine valleys from Zuingli's patriotic soul. It was the subject of Latimer's blunt home-thrusts at the practical heart of England, and it thun-

dered throughout Scotland from the stern and fearless Knox. The doctrine of repentance is the appendix to every republication of the Ten Commandments, and the preface to every offer of the Gospel. So, when Samuel taught, this was his awakening theme. The law of God was his great argument, and the acquiescing consciences of the people his responses to the truth; therefore, with authority and with boldness did he convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The people began to awake. A deep impression fell upon them all from Dan to Beersheba. They saw their sin in the light of God's law. Twenty years of unpardoned sin was a heart-breaking retrospect. And therefore did they lament. It was well to be awakened from the long spiritual sleep. It was well to be sorry for their sin. 2. Samuel sought fruits meet for repentance. The people were anxious, for sin oppressed their souls; but Samuel did not rest satisfied with the expressed emotion. He demanded instant proof of professed sincerity. To give up evil ways is one of the earliest signs of a penitent soul. It is indispensable to separate from whatever contaminates the soul. To put away idolatry was, therefore, the first requirement which Samuel made of the awakened people. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, when the people were awakened, they cleared the churches and also their houses of all images used for worship. When Christianity was successfully introduced among the South Sea Islanders, the burning of the idols was the proof of their sincere awakening. 3. Samuel urged a believing return to the Lord. Repentance does not constitute reformation. It is only the outer court. By faith we enter into the holy place. Faith lays hold of a covenant God, of His pardoning mercy and justifying righteousness. Faith is the reunion of the soul to the Lord. The heart must have an object. No person is without a god, to whom all his efforts are devoted, and on whom his affections are placed. It may be the world, or the creature, or self, or some superstition, or else the true God. The tendency of the heart is to the false and the worldly. But the awakened conscience finds no satisfaction in anything less than God. When the work of reformation was being wrought among the people Samuel felt anxious that all the nation should realise the benefit. He therefore summoned all Israel together. "They drew water and poured it out before the Lord." This was not a Divine institution; but it was a practice frequently observed to give confirmation to solemn pledges. It perhaps implied that as "water is spilled upon the ground and cannot be gathered up again," so their vow was never to be recalled, but to be preserved in all its obligation and obedience. It is like that testimony which Scotland, as a nation, once gave to the Covenant in a time of spiritual revival. "At request of their devoted leaders in the Reformation, the people crowded to Edinburgh from all parts of the country, and assembled in the Greyfriars' Churchyard to the number of sixty thousand! Alexander Henderson stood forth in their midst, and, in a prayer of wondrous power and pathos, confessed the nation's sins, and their desire to return to the Lord and to the purity of worship commanded in His word. It was then proposed to join themselves in a covenant engagement to maintain the Lord's cause. The deed was read and explained." Those that had doubts were conferred with ere the deed was subscribed. "Again," says the historian, "a deep and solemn pause ensued; not the pause of irresolution, but of modest diffidence, each thinking every other more worthy than himself to place the first name upon this sacred bond. An aged nobleman, the venerable Earl of Sutherland, at length stepped slowly and reverentially forward, and with throbbing heart and trembling hand subscribed Scotland's covenant with God. All hesitation in a moment disappeared. Name followed name in swift succession, till all within the church had given their signatures. It was then removed into the churchyard and spread out on a level gravestone to obtain the subscription of the assembled multitude. As the space became filled they wrote their names in a contracted form, limiting them at last to the initial letters, till not a spot remained on which another letter could be inscribed. There was another pause. The nation had framed a covenant in former days and had violated its engagements, hence the calamities in which it had been and was involved. If they too should break this sacred bond how deep would be their guilt! Such seem to have been their thoughts during this period of silent communing with their own hearts; for, as moved by one spirit, they lifted up their right hands to heaven, avowing by this solemn appeal that they had now joined themselves to the Lord by an everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten. In Israel, Samuel stood forth and led the services of worship. Nor could that day be soon forgotten by the people. It witnessed the renewal of their covenant with the Lord. It recorded their marvellous mercy,

when the crimson stains of twenty years were for ever wiped out by God. It celebrated the recovery of a nation's backsliding, when sins which as a thick cloud had darkened their moral firmament were blotted out. Backslider, Mizpeh speaks to thee! That spectacle of a nation's penitence, and the healing of a long backsliding, tells thee that there is mercy with God, and illustrates His words of love, "Return unto me, ye backsliding children; I will heal your backslidings." Unconverted sinner, Mizpeh speaks to thee! That scene of repentance after twenty years of sins, reveals many who then first found the Lord. Backsliders were restored, the impenitent might be saved. (*R. Steel*.) **Gather all Israel to Mizpeh.**—*The brotherhood of worship*:—In the establishment of one of our great goldsmiths is a vast iron safe with many locks, containing immense treasure, but no one can open that chest; the keys are in the hands of many trustees, and only by their concurrence can the hidden wealth be made manifest. Thus it is in the natural and in the spiritual world, the wealth of the Divine blessing can be reached only through the brotherhood of man, the brotherhood of saints. "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together." (*W. L. Watkinson*.)

Vers. 7-11. **The Philistines went up against Israel.**—*The holy war*:—The revival of religion has ever had a most important bearing on social and political improvement. The return of man to God restores him to his brother. Restoration to the earnest and hearty performance of spiritual duties towards God leads to a corresponding reformation in relative and political duties. It was the revival of religion that gave such liberty to the Protestant nations in the sixteenth century. It was the revival of religion which secured the Protestant succession in England, and many of the liberties which we now enjoy. It was the revival of religion that gave such a martyr-roll to the Scottish Covenanters, and led to the Revolution settlement of 1688. It is to the religious revivals that America owes much of the political happiness which, amidst the most discordant elements, it has possessed. In the reformation under Samuel patriotism was revived, the independence of the nation was recovered, and in such a way as showed the gracious interposition of a covenant God. Many revivals have had trying ordeals at the outset and a baptism of fire. Pentecost was immediately succeeded by a bloody persecution. The planting of the Church among the heathen was in the midst of enmity and opposition. Ten fierce persecutions were the experience of the religion of Christ, while it was advancing successfully through the Roman Empire. Few reformations were accomplished in the sixteenth century without martyr fires. So we find in the days of Samuel that the renewed Church of Israel was a child of storm and conflict. It was not strange that, when the preaching of Samuel had been instrumental in awakening the Hebrews, and when they were seeking to reform their worship and renew their covenant with God, their oppressors should attempt to restrain their incipient patriotism, and to inflict a chastisement. Persecution is the first object of tyrannical powers when a subject people are revived to freedom of thought and devotion to God. When the cause of God receives any new spiritual impulse there are not wanting those who seek to arrest it by persecution, by controversy, or by secular temptations. When the fagot cannot pervert, dissension may weaken; when threats fail, bribery may corrupt. The first prevailed in Spain, when the dreadful Inquisition destroyed the rising Protestantism. The second nullified the influence of the Reformation in some of the German States. The third prevailed where a tempting Erastianism reduced the Church to worldliness. The time of revival is therefore a season of imminent danger. The Philistines are then upon you. Are you awakened to spiritual concern? Satan is also aroused to effect his intended ruin of your soul. Are you about to take up the cross and to make a Christian profession? He is active to bring about your fall. The Philistines are then upon you. On a former occasion, when they were in similar danger, they reposed their trust in the ark of the Lord; but now their confidence is in the God of the ark. They confided in the form, now in the reality. Before they were apostate and impenitent; now, they are awakened, reconciled, and devoted to the service of God. In their extremity, therefore, they urge prayer. They seek Samuel's intercession. 1. It was the most powerful means of aid. "Prayer moves the arm that moves the universe." It can wrestle with the Angel and have power with God and prevail. It is the divinely appointed means of assistance: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." 2. It was prayer in which they had all a believing interest. The people are ready to join when Samuel uttered his supplication. Their earnest desire gave intensity to

Samuel's words; their faith gave power to his believing intercession. Many hearts united in one exercise. 3. It was prayer to their covenant God. "Cry unto our God for us." They had just renewed their covenant with God, and accepted Him as theirs. He had been their father's God—a prayer-hearing, covenant-keeping God. They knew to whom they addressed their cry. It was to no unknown god, nor to an imaginary deity. Rest your soul on Jesus. Then every prayer is offered to a Friend in whom you have confidence, and from whom you may expect a blessing. 4. It was prayer for a definite object. They specified their want. They stated the desire of their hearts. Too many pray in a way so general as to exhibit little interest in what they ask. When public prayer was made a sacrifice was offered. The intercession was dependent on atonement. The efficacy of the petition was in the acceptance of the substitute. Thus it was that Samuel took a lamb in all the purity of its youth and offered it wholly unto the Lord. The atonement made by the Redeemer was infinite, and is sufficient to take away wrath from thee. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Our prayers must ever rest for all their efficacy on the Lamb of God. Ascending in the name of Jesus they will prevail. This is what is meant when we ask for Christ's sake. Samuel's prayer prevailed, and the answer came ere his worship was performed. They had returned to God; they had secured His help. The Lord listened to their prayer of faith, and that day fought their battles. The artillery of heaven was moved against the Philistines. Israel was victorious without feats of arms. Nor was this the only instance in their history. God had made the waters of the Red Sea His weapons to overcome the Egyptians. In the Valley of Ajalon hailstones did the work of conquerors, and the natural day was prolonged to give Joshua the victory. In after days, too, the hosts of Sennacherib were vanquished by the destroying angel in answer to the prayer of Hezekiah. And in the future yet to be realised the believing supplication of the ransomed Church will secure the interposition of God on the field of Armageddon to baffle the armies of the world united to destroy his cause. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is the lesson we may draw from this event in the days of Samuel. The Church of God is threatened in critical times. All over the world events seem preparing to try the faith and energy of professing Christians. But so long as prayer is so blessed a resource the little flock need not fear. God is the glory in the midst of His cause, and the wall of fire around her. (R. Steel.) *National deliverance*:—The great thunder with which God thundered on the Philistines carried down from God the answer and the needed help. There is no need for supposing that the thunder was supernatural. It was an instance of what is so common, a natural force adapted to the purpose of an answer to prayer. Natural, but not casual. Though natural, it was God's answer to Samuel's prayer. But how could this have been? If it was a natural storm, if it was the result of natural law, of atmospheric conditions, the operation of which was fixed and certain, it must have taken place whether Samuel prayed or not. Undoubtedly. The uniformity of natural law enables the Almighty, who sees and plans the end from the beginning, to frame a comprehensive scheme of Providence that shall not only work out the final result in His time and way, but that shall also work out every intermediate result precisely as He designs and desires. Surely, if there is a general Providence, there must be a special Providence. If God guides the whole He must also guide the parts. 1. Let us apply this view to the matter of prayer. The prayer of Samuel was prayer which God had inspired. What more reasonable than that in the great plan of Providence there should have been included a provision for the fulfilment of Samuel's prayer at the appropriate moment? The thunderstorm, we may be sure, was a natural phenomenon. The only thing miraculous about it was its forming a part of that most marvellous scheme—the scheme of Divine Providence—a part of the scheme that was to be carried into effect after Samuel had prayed. If the term supernatural may be fitly applied to that scheme which is the sum and substance of all the laws of nature, of all the Providence of God, and of all the works and thoughts of man, then it was a miracle; but, if not, it was a natural effect. It is important to bear these truths in mind, because many have the impression that prayer for outward results cannot be answered without a miracle, and that it is unreasonable to suppose that such a multitude of miracles as prayer involves would be wrought every day. We do not deny that prayer may be answered in a supernatural way. But it is most useful that the idea should be entertained that such prayer is usually answered by natural means. By not attending to this men often fail to perceive that prayer has been

answered. Let the means be as natural as they may—to those who have eyes to see the finger of God is in them all the same. But to return to the Israelites and the Philistines. The defeat of the Philistines was a very thorough one. The impression thus made on the enemies of Israel corresponds in some degree to the moral influence which God-fearing men sometimes have on an otherwise godless community. In the great awakening at Northampton in Jonathan Edwards' days there was a complete arrest laid on open forms of vice. And whensoever in a community God's presence has been powerfully realised, the taverns have been emptied, the gambling-table deserted, under the sense of His august majesty. Would only that the character and life of all God's servants were so truly godlike that their very presence in a community would have a subduing and restraining influence on the wicked! 2. The step taken by Samuel to commemorate this wonderful Divine interposition. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us.—*The cry for mediation*:—I. **MEDIATION SOUGHT.** The Israelites, unarmed, undefended, are in great dismay. They turn to Samuel and implore his continued intercession. 1. Times of humiliation for sin and of reformation from sin are times in which the foe is very busy—doing what he can to hinder. 2. Times of humiliation and awakening produce a sense of need of an intercessor from personal unworthiness, from the gravity and danger of the occasion, from the difficulty of relation to the unseen. We want some one to act for us. The principle of mediation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ does fit in with our nature and condition. II. **MEDIATION EXERCISED.** Samuel prays and sacrifices. 1. Takes a young lamb. 2. Prays. The mediation of Jesus Christ is so divinely suitable and sufficient, as He is both priest and sacrifice. His offering and intercession may give us "boldness and access with confidence." III. **MEDIATION ACCEPTED.** "The Lord heard him." 1. Interposition by means of the elements of the natural world. 2. The foe is completely routed. (*H. Gammage.*)

Ver. 12. And Samuel took a stone.—*The everlasting memorial*:—How few of Egypt's modern inhabitants know who built those works of wonder that still draw crowds of travellers! It might be said, in the words of one who longed for posthumous fame, and had done much to merit it, but who knew what had been the experience of departed greatness—it might be said with Solomon: "There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever: seeing that which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten." (*Eccles. ii. 16.*) But there is a memorial which shall never be erased—a monument that shall never crumble into dust, and persons who shall never be forgotten. The events connected with the life everlasting have all their stones of remembrance, and the righteous shall ever shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. The providences which ministered to the children of God are all recorded in the heart, and will ever be recalled with thanksgiving to the God of grace who ordered them. In the history of His Church God has commemorated the interpositions and providences of His hand. Many a monumental stone stands in the chronicles of Israel. Ararat is ever associated with Noah's thank-offering after the Deluge. Mount Moriah has been embalmed in believing hearts since Abraham built there his altar and called it *Jehovah-jireh*—"The Lord will provide." Since Jacob set up the stone which had been his pillow on that memorable night when he saw the ladder, Bethel has been fondly cherished by all who love the House of God. When Jordan was crossed by the pilgrim Church twelve stones marked out the spot where the priests' feet had stood; and Bochim became associated with the record of a nation's tears. So when Samuel and the children of Israel received such a token of the Lord's love and help in their victory at Mizpeh in answer to prayer they erected a stone and called it *Ebenezer*, to perpetuate their gratitude. Thus has the Church of God advanced. Constituted a pilgrim through this wilderness to the land of promise, every step of progress marks her gratitude. Commissioned to war against sin, every conquest becomes a spiritual march in music. Sent to evangelise, every convert is a trophy and "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" is the chorus of every stanza in her progressive song. Thus David set to music the history of Divine mercy to His people, and recalled the past in their daily praises, while the experience of his own soul became the "Hitherto" of the common chorus. The perils to which the children of Israel were exposed were beyond their own strength to overcome. They were weakened by oppression. They were faint by backsliding. They needed help from the hand of God. They had met together at Mizpeh, and, amidst

general weeping, had confessed their sins, and renewed their covenant with God. But as they were paying their vows, and joining in a religious service, they were wantonly attacked. Their new-born zeal was put to an early test; but as their penitence was sincere, their vow hearty, their prayer believing, so was the faithfulness of God availing in their need. How many hearts were that day restored to God, confirmed in faith, and revived to prayer! Temporal deliverance and spiritual restoration went hand in hand, and a common Ebenezer marked the rare experience. The Church was blessed with a revival, and the State with liberty; souls were awakened, and citizens restored to patriotism. The spiritual man became the truest patriot, the best subject of the laws, and the most courageous defender of the State. Thus they had reason for this stone of remembrance and this eucharistic inscription. But they teach us a lesson—both in temporal and spiritual things to recognise the answer to our prayer, and to give thanks. Have you experienced the providential mercies of God? They demand recognition—a stone of memorial, and an Ebenezer—a psalm of thanksgiving. Have you been brought onward in life to this day, finding daily bread and watchful care? But there are other blessings of greater importance to the soul, and which call for special notice and unceasing gratitude—the helps vouchsafed in grace. The deliverance of the soul from sin is a Divine interposition of the grandest kind. The recovery of the soul from backsliding is an appropriate occasion for an Ebenezer. It was this especially which was Israel's national blessing. Their deliverance from the Philistines followed their restoration from the backsliding of twenty years. It was a touching token of the Lord's acceptance of their tears and of their prayers. It was a manifest pledge of His unchanging love. After a season of carelessness, spiritual sloth, and coldness in prayer, have you been revived? Has your first love returned? Then, have you returned to give God thanks, and in a more consistent devotedness inscribed the Ebenezer of your soul? These Ebezers are useful to the believer. They remind him of dependence, and recall his confidence in the strength of God. They encourage him by the past, to trust and not be afraid in all future trials. (*R. Steel.*) *Ebenezer*:—It is certainly a very delightful thing to mark the hand of God in the lives of ancient saints. But would it not be even more interesting and profitable for us to remark the hand of God in our own lives? Ought we not to look upon our own history as being at least as full of God, as full of His goodness and of His truth, as much a proof of His faithfulness and veracity as the lives of any of the saints who have gone before? Have you had no deliverances? Have you passed through no rivers, supported by the Divine presence? Have you walked through no fires unharmed? Have you had no manifestations? Again, it is a very delightful exercise to remember the various ways in which the grateful saints recorded their thankfulness. Who can look without pleasure upon the altar which Noah reared after his preservation from the universal deluge? Would it not be quite as pleasant, and more profitable for us to record the mighty acts of the Lord as we have seen them? Should not we set up the altar unto His name, or weave His mercies into a song?

I. THE SPOT WHERE THE STONE OF EBENEZER WAS SET UP. 1. Twenty years before on that field Israel was routed. Twenty years before, Hophni and Phineas, the priests of the Lord, were slain upon that ground, and the ark of the Lord was taken, and the Philistines triumphed. It was well that they should remember the defeat they had sustained and that amidst the joyous victory they should recollect that the battle had been turned into a defeat unless the Lord had been upon their side. Let us remember our defeats. 2. The field between Mizpeh and Shen would also refresh their memories concerning their sins, for it was sin that conquered them. Had not their hearts been captured by sin, their land had never been captured by Philistia. Had they not turned their backs upon their God, they would not have turned their backs in the day of conflict. Let us recollect our sins; they will serve as a black foil on which the mercy of God shall glisten the more brightly. 3. Again, that spot would remind them of their sorrows. What a mournful chapter in Israel's history is that which follows their defeat by the Philistines. 4. While dwelling upon the peculiarity of the locality, we must remark that, as it had been the spot of their defeat, their sin, their sorrow, so now before the victory, it was the place of their repentance. You see, they came together to repent, to confess their sins, to put away their false gods, to cast Ash-taroath from their houses and from their hearts. It was there that they saw God's hand and were led to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." When you and I are most diligent in hunting sin, then God will be most valiant in routing our

foes. 5. You must remember, too, that Ebenezer was the place of lamentation after the Lord. They came together to pray God to return to them. We shall surely see God when we long after Him. 6. On that day, too, Mizpeh was the place of renewed covenant, and its name signifies the watch-tower. These people, I say, came together to renew their covenant with God, and wait for Him as upon a watch-tower. Whenever God's people look back upon the past they should renew their covenant with God. Put your hand into the hand of Christ anew, thou saint of the Most High, and give thyself to Him again. II. THE OCCASION OF THE ERECTION OF THIS MEMORIAL. The tribes had assembled unarmed to worship. The Philistines, hearing of their gathering, suspected a revolt. A rising was not at that time contemplated, though no doubt there was lurking in the hearts of the people a hope that they would somehow or other be delivered. The Philistines being as a nation far inferior in numbers to the children of Israel, they had the natural suspiciousness of weak oppressors. If we must have tyrants let them be strong ones, for they are never so jealous or cruel as those little despots who are always afraid of rebellion. 1. The victory obtained was by the lamb. As soon as the lamb was slaughtered, and the smoke went up to heaven, the blessing began to descend upon the Israelites, and the curse upon the foes. "They smote them"—note the words—they "smote them until they came under Bethcar," which, being interpreted, signifies "the house of the Lamb." At the offering of the lamb the Israelites began to fight the Philistines, and slew them even to the house of the lamb. If we have done anything for Christ, bear witness that it has been all through the Lamb. 2. As in this occurrence the sacrifice was exalted, so also was the power of prayer acknowledged. The Philistines were not routed except by prayer. Samuel prayed unto the Lord. They said, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us." Let us bear our witness that if aught of good has been accomplished it has been the result of prayer. 3. Again, as there was prayer and sacrifice, you must remember that in answer to the sweet savour of the lamb and the sweet perfume of Samuel's intercession, Jehovah came forth to rout his foes. III. THE INSCRIPTION UPON THE MEMORIAL, "Ebenezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped us." The inscription may be read in three ways. You must read first of all its central word, the word on which all the sense depends, where the fulness of it gathers. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." Note that they did not stand still and refuse to use their weapons, but while God was thundering they were fighting, and while the lightnings were flashing in the foeman's eyes they were making them feel the potency of their steel. So that while we glorify God we are not to deny or to discard human agency. We must fight because God fighteth for us. I said this text might be read three ways. We have read it once by laying stress upon the centre word. Now it ought to be read looking backward. The word "hitherto" seems like a hand pointing in that direction. Look back, look back. Then the text may be read a third way—looking forward. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes "hitherto," he looks back upon much that is past, but "hitherto" is not the end, there is yet a distance to be traversed. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *A New Year's Sermon*:—That battle was won before a single blow was struck. That victory was achieved at the Throne of Grace, where many a glorious triumph has been gained which never could have been secured elsewhere. Prayer was the mighty weapon which Israel wielded to the utter discomfiture of the Philistine hosts. The power of prayer lies in the power which prayer commands: the power of God. I. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE TEXT, AS THEY ENTER DEEPLY INTO RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. We are taught: 1. That we all need help from God. Christians need assistance from a power superior to their own as certainly as did Israel at this crisis. Sin, which has robbed man of his original rectitude, has also deprived him of strength. Unrescued by Divine grace, he is utterly powerless. Nor does the most matured Christian possess the least spiritual energy but as he receives it from on high. There is no equality between the power of the Christian's enemies and his own unaided efforts. There are times when the Christian becomes so painfully conscious of this that he is almost ready to quit the field, but this, instead of driving us to despair, should operate powerfully in leading us to God for help, so as to feel with the Apostle: "When I am weak, then am I strong." 2. The help of God is bestowed in connection with the use of the means appointed by God, and it is only in their employment that we can reasonably expect Divine aid. Neither the fact of our weakness nor the promise of Divine assistance has been revealed to lead to the exclusion of human exertion. The text implies that it is "help" that is pro-

mised, not the performance of the work for us, but assistance by which we shall be enabled to do our duty. 3. The actual bestowment of this help. The text records a fact: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." It was not help promised or provided merely, but help actually bestowed. Help implies just that amount of assistance which the case requires, and by which the Christian shall be sustained under every trial, and delivered out of the last. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE HELP WHICH GOD SUPPLIES. 1. Suitable and efficient. Without adaptation in the remedy the case must remain unrelieved. The source of the Christian's help stamps its character. It is Divine. 2. Divine help is certain. Human aid, feeble as it is, is very uncertain in its bestowment. By a sad perversity of human nature, there is a disposition to confer favours with a liberal hand on those who are already affluent, while the indigent are sometimes allowed to drag out a miserable existence and pine away in penury. If a man once opulent should be ruined by misfortunes, persons who proudly recognised him when on the height of prosperity pass him by as if the man's calamities had so altered every feature of his countenance that they cannot recognise him. Should an individual fall a prey to his own folly, pride and extravagance, he must struggle with his self-caused miseries alone. And not infrequently a cold, inactive, good-for-nothing sympathy is all that is manifested toward the most deserving. But the causes which render human aid so uncertain cannot affect God. The relation which He sustains to His Church renders it impossible for Him to regard the interests of any of its members with indifference: "God is in the midst of her; . . . God shall help her, and that right early." 3. This help is seasonable. It comes at the right time to a moment. It may not be given just when it is expected, nor when to human eyes it would seem most desirable. But are the Divine plans and arrangements to be precipitated and thrown into confusion just to meet human fretfulness and impatience? The God by Whom help is bestowed knows the most opportune season for its bestowment. God is attentive to "times and seasons;" and the Divine slowness has never been opposed to the Divine punctuality. 4. The help of God is constant and unfailing. "Hitherto," wrote Samuel, "the Lord hath helped us." This was at a protracted period in the history of God's people, and up to that time there had nothing failed of all that the Lord had spoken. Whenever they were defeated it was not the result of failure in the Source of their supplies, but of their own unfaithfulness and sins. The promise of Divine help is conditional; and only let the conditions of the promise be fulfilled, and the help shall be continued. The last soldier on the field of Christian warfare; the last labourer in the vineyard of the Lord; the last pilgrim in the toilsome way to heaven, will need help from God as we do at this moment; and all shall have it. III. THE CONDUCT TO WHICH THIS HELP SHOULD LEAD ON OUR PART. 1. Grateful acknowledgment of past favours. The expression of gratitude was public and monumental. There is a way of making the expression of our gratitude monumental and lasting by making it practical. Seize every opportunity of testifying to the goodness and faithfulness of God. Let the world know what a wise and almighty Helper ours is. Strive to spread the truth of God; and labour to perpetuate the institutions and auxiliaries of the Christian Church. 2. Past help should lead to confidence in God at the present moment. The words of Samuel were retrospective; but this recognition of past help was designed to teach the practical lesson: "Have faith in God" now. When friends meet who have a past to look back upon they soon talk over the difficulties and trials with which they have had to struggle, memory generally recalls them first. At a deeply afflictive crisis in David's life, when our harps would have been unstrung and mute, the Psalmist swept his and pealed forth: "I will sing of mercy and judgment." He saw that the two were blended, and he would sing of both; but as "mercy" greatly predominated, he placed that first in his song. 3. Inspire hope as to the future. (*Samuel Wesley.*) *Ebenezer*:—God must be acknowledged in all our mercies, and it is delightful to be able to see in them the answer of believing and fervent supplication. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." I. Let us consider WHAT WE HAVE TO RECORD. II. Let us now consider WITH WHAT VIEWS AND FEELINGS OUR STONE OF MEMORIAL SHOULD BE SET UP, and this expressive word, *Ebenezer*, inscribed upon it. 1. With sincere piety. To ascribe the honour and power of a work of grace to ministers instead of God the Spirit, is about as irrational as it would be to give praise and glory to the pen with which Milton wrote his immortal poem, instead of giving it to the sublime genius of the bard himself. O let me be forgotten as far as possible, and Christ only thought of. 2. This expression,

Ebenezer, must be uttered by us, as it was by Samuel and the Jews, with adoring wonder. 3. Can joy be absent or unsuitable on this occasion? Impossible! 4. A sense of unworthiness should make our gratitude the more intensely fervent. (*J. A. James.*) *Ebenezer*:—Monuments generally have two objects. They are intended to ornament a country or town, and to celebrate the glories of the hero to whose memory they are raised. A monument is erected after a successful battle, in order to glorify the leader under whose auspices the battle was fought and the victory won. The cathedral of St. Paul's is, by the inscription above the doorway, a perpetual proof how even a great man may be thinking rather too prominently about himself when he is rearing a temple to the Most High God. But Samuel, though he has been instrumental in achieving very much more than a triumph in battle—for he has effected a great moral revolution and revival—never thinks about himself. Two thoughts and purposes vividly occupy and fill his mind. One is to magnify Jehovah, to exalt His name, to keep Him before the people; and the other is to be useful to the people. He wants to assist them to be trustful and brave, because relying on God. I. EBENEZER IS THE LANDMARK OF WORK ACCOMPLISHED. There are some people, as you know, or perhaps I ought to say that it is a peculiarity which characterises all people more or less, that they have a very keen sense of evils and disadvantages which belong to the present, and a very dull perception of the privileges secured and the progress which has been made. Of this we have a familiar illustration in the Israelites themselves. Men are constantly looking with affectionate regret upon the past—

“That past which always wins a glory from its being far,
And orbs into the perfect star we saw not when we moved therein.”

Whatever millennium there may be is there in the “good old times.” Hence, the world is always standing still or going back. Now against such tendencies as these Ebenezer is a needed and useful protest. There may be other hills to climb, and they may be hills which will try our strength to the very utmost; but let not this prevent our acknowledging with joy and thankfulness that one hill has, at least, been climbed. The Church is a long, long way from perfection, I know. The grey dawn is not breaking at this very moment into the golden tints of the millennial morning; nay, the clouds may be as thick as they were in Israel under Ahab and Jezebel. Nevertheless, let Elijah remember that that glorious scene did take place on Carmel, the fire did come down from heaven, and the king of darkness did receive a staggering blow. Say what you will, the Lord did thunder in the heavens with a great thunder, and the Philistines were discomfited by it, therefore set up a stone and call it Ebenezer. The world is bad enough, God knows, but thank God it is not without its Ebenezers. In those good old times to which you are looking back there were not so many cases of drunkenness recorded; but neither were there so many people to get drunk nor so many newspapers to bring the sin to light. In those good old times the English artisan and the English yeoman were little better than serfs; and though the day of emancipation is bringing out a generation as demoralised (or so they say) as that which followed Moses out of Egypt, and is marked by excesses as wild as those which raged at Meribah and Massah and under the mount, still the day of emancipation has dawned, and my firm expectation is that the womb of the future is bearing within it a race of Israelites indeed, who will enter into the promised land. In those good old times the traffic in human souls, which degrades man to the level of goods and chattels, was not only tolerated, but defended on Christian principles. In the good old times war was an expedient to which any tyrant who felt himself strong enough would resort without compunction, and without exciting any deep indignation. Now a moral sense in regard to war has grown up, which can compel even the most powerful of tyrants to pause ere he wantonly draws the sword. Yes; the Philistines may not be driven out of the country; they may not be utterly annihilated; but their grip, which was at our throat for more than twenty years, has been shaken off. They have been heavily smitten; they are at least quiet. Raise then a stone, and call it “Ebenezer,” for hitherto hath the Lord helped us. II. THIS STONE IS A MONUMENTAL MEMORIAL OF THE SECRET OF SUCCESS. Come near to it and read what is written thereon, and you will find—not some inflated bombast extolling the valour of the Israelites, but—a very simple sentence, giving glory to

Jehovah of Hosts. And see how the future which is briefly epitomised in the next verse confirms this "hitherto." "The hand of the Lord was against them all the days of Samuel." And what was Samuel?—a mighty man of valour? a Moltke among generals? a Bismarck among statesmen? Nay; but a judge who built up a kingdom of righteousness, and pre-eminently a man who could pray. Praying, as his very name implies, was his forte. It was as one who called upon the Lord that he was distinguished. And it was under the *régime* of prayer that the Philistines were held in such complete subjugation. The truth which is thus condensed in the word Ebenezer is of the utmost practical importance. There is a Divine Ruler who providentially governs and personally superintends the lives of individuals and the histories of nations. We are not living under a reign of abstract law or inexorable fate; we are not moved round by a mechanism of wheels, revolving in predestined cycles, and grinding out an unalterable sequence of causes and effects. Let devout faith set up then a stone and write upon it, Ebenezer, and with what awful and yet rapturous solemnities life becomes invested. I have often stood with a feeling of almost reverence upon me, high up on some mountain-side, looking at vast mysterious boulders, once deposited there by forces which it is hardly possible to conceive, but to the existence of which these mighty masses of rock are the indisputable testimony. But when I come upon Ebenezer, I come upon a stone which says to me, "The mighty God, even Jehovah Himself, has been here. Here the sword of the Lord has been flashing unsheathed, and here the banner of the Lord has been waving unfurled." Let devout faith set up a stone and write upon it Ebenezer, and with what calm, persistent, uncompromising steadiness we are inspired to advance, just living and working out the everlasting will of righteousness, and simply do that which is just and true and acceptable to God. The only peril you have really to fear is the extinction of Samuel as a reigning influence; for then you will be on the same footing as the other nations of the earth, and the question will be: Can you send as many battalions as they can into the field? So long as Samuel, the man of righteousness and the man of prayer, is influential, you will come safe out of every crisis, under the banner of the God of battles. Remember Ebenezer, and let that keep you from meddling, hasty tactics, as well as from despondency or dismay; and let the believer come and rest his soul upon this stone. (*R. H. Roberts, M.A.*) *God's past mercies the encouragement to future trust*:—In forming our opinion of certain actions, and in pronouncing them to be either good or bad, useful or injurious, their character must be ascertained from the principle on which they are wrought. A splendid deed, which mankind would applaud, may, in the sight of God, be almost as strong an indication of a corrupt heart, as a foul transaction, which all would unite in condemning. The fact is, man regards the outward appearance only, the Lord looks on the heart. A simple stone set up in the name of the Lord, may as effectually denote the overflows of gratitude, as a costly magnificent temple, dedicated with all the pomp and solemnity of modern architecture. Such was the case in the instance recorded in the text. The prophet Samuel, though dead, still speaks to us; he seems to afford a practical illustration of Solomon's admonition, "In all thy ways acknowledge God, and He shall direct thy path." This is the duty inculcated, which we would earnestly desire to see transcribed in your lives. If, then, we add our wonderful preservation from seen and unseen dangers; the way in which the Lord hath helped us over our mountains of difficulty, or out of the depths of tribulation, smoothing our path when it was rugged to our step, or straightening it when it was crooked; if we have experienced that a blessing hath rested on the operation of our hands, or on the meditation of our hearts; if, in the domestic relations of life, we have been favoured with any special tokens of God's superintending providence and fostering protection (and who has not had them?), what gratitude ought to be ours; what abundant occasion have we to adopt—what demons of darkness should we be if we did not adopt—the sentiment of Samuel, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." But this may be a mere empty expression of the lips, or, at least, a mere transitory ebullition of feeling, evaporating with the event which has called forth the sentiment. We would wish that the impression should be permanent, such as would only terminate with our lives; we would wish to see erected some standing memorial of the loving kindness of the Lord, which should declare his goodness, and bespeak our gratitude. How is this to be effected in the present day, since such a rude memorial of Divine mercy would be inconsistent with the notions of

modern refinement? It may be accomplished in two ways. Those who have omitted to do so, may lay the foundation-stone of a domestic altar, and rear a structure in their houses, on which may be placed the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. But the conduct of Samuel may be imitated in another point of view, by the reception of Christ Jesus in our hearts; thus to erect a spiritual edifice in our souls, and to make our bodies the temple of the Holy Ghost. Christ is indeed that living stone, which we would see the tenant of every bosom testifying in a lively way of providential and redeeming mercies: a "stone disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious;" a "tried stone," a "sure foundation;" but to "some a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence:" a stone, which the builders, in their impiety and folly, rejected, which is now become the head of the corner; yes, it is indeed this Rock of Ages, which we desire to see set up in all our hearts, at all times, and upon all occasions, as the stable basis on which to erect a structure of temporal or eternal blessedness; as the sure refuge and hiding-place from the storm of adversity, or the gale of prosperity. Here, then, we have the line of conduct we earnestly recommend for your adoption, strongly enforced by the patriarch of old: receive *Him* into your hearts, whom we preach unto you as the author and finisher of your salvation. Let the idol-altar be thrown down, and the name of Jesus Christ be inscribed thereon; may that natural, dead, indurated heart yield its place to the living stone, which will impart new life and vigour to all its energies and emotions, and gratefully record the achievements of Divine grace to the glory of God the Father. (*H. S. Plumptre, M.A.*) *Memorials of Divine Mercy*:—There is a distinct recognition, here, of the hand of God in providence; and there is a marking of the event of God's interference in their behalf by some visible outward sign which would serve to bring it back to them. For no man, after the battle and the victory, returning that way, and beholding this stone, would forget it. They would cherish it in their memory, and tell their children of it. And if their occasions or needs ever took any of them again through the region of their old captivity, their old fear, the old battle and the old victory, that outside memorial would stand to remind them, not merely of each external event but also of the interior moral truth that it was of the Lord's mercies that they were preserved, and that it was of God's interposing providence that they were victorious. Now, we are in many respects like the Israelites. There are, in the history of every man, certain remarkable events that are worthy to be remembered. The gracious and providential interference of God in our behalf deserves to be noted. The memory of all His mercies ought to be perpetuated. Every critical period, as the turning of the year; every point of success in any enterprise of life; every point where we gain a higher joy, whether it be secular, or social, or spiritual; every new relation which promises great blessedness to us; every business achievement which seems to lift us out of darkness and out of difficulties; every great mischief that impended as a threatening sky, but that is rolled away—every such event or experience ought to have a distinct recognition. We should think of them in their individuality, and in their sequences; and it would be well for us if we could set up some memorial, and be able to say to one and another, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me. It is the Lord—not my skill, not my wisdom, not my prowess—that hath helped me hitherto." Our true life is the inward life. It deserves, therefore, to be specially watched and recorded. No other thing deserves such celebrations as a man's inward victory—his inward deliverance. A blessing that comes from God should be recognised by us, though it comes in no visible form. No one who has a constant succession of good fortune, keeps any ideal in his mind of the number of Divine mercies of which he is the recipient. If God were to recount what He has done for us, it would seem as though our life were a golden chain, in which one golden link clasped another, every hour being a link, and every day lengthening the chain. I sometimes think, of a night, that it is a sin to go into the house and leave God's glory flashing abroad in the Northern Lights, or in the stellar exhibitions in all the broad expanse above, without a witness—certainly without my witnessing them. I feel as though it were a stupidity to retire to sleep with all this amazing display going on. For, what are men's inventions and ingenuities compared with those astonishing developments which every summer's day shows us in the clouds, in the storms, and in frescoes of light and beauty? Every single day there is enough in the silence of nature, and in the might of nature, enough to fill the soul with joy and gratitude. But, while day tells it to day, and night repeats it to night, man sees

but little of it. There may be kept a calendar of dates. It is astonishing how much one can preserve in this way with very little trouble. When travelling in Europe, I was so full of excitement and enjoyment that I had not time to keep a journal; so I just put down under each date one single word—the name of the city; or the name of the picture; or the name of the mountain; or the name of the pass; or the name of some person whom I had met; and now I can go back over a month's travels, and, though there are but these single words, that whole history starts up when I look at them. If you regularly take a memorandum book, at night, and think back through the day, and bring up before you what God has done for you, what He has shown you, what significant thing has happened, and put down the caption of it under the proper date, you will be surprised to find what a calendar your book will become at the end of every year. In some of the German houses there is a charming habit of this sort. Instead of papering their rooms, or frescoing them in the ordinary way, they employ the ablest artists of their times to paint their walls with the most exquisite landscapes, which are to stand there for ages. And in these landscapes are representations of their own family here and there. Here, for instance, are the grand-parents; there are the children; and here are the friends and neighbours. And so, one has in his house, a kind of memorial of his social relationships, and of everything significant in his family history. It is a most charming idea if it be executed fitly. But I would not recommend to you any such custom as this, which is very expensive, and unfitted to our habits and manners. And yet, it is quite possible for one to have objects on his wall, which shall answer very much the same purpose. A leaf here, an anchor there, or a little flower, plucked, dried, and hung in its proper place, may mark some significant passage in one's history. This may be seen in castles. The man of the castle says, "Do you see those antlers? Do you see that frontal? I will give you a history of that hunting expedition." They are memorials which he has preserved of various experiences in hunting. Why should not every dawning mercy have a star blazing from the wall, and saying to every one that looks upon it, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me?" Why should our houses be so barren of our own history? Why should we leave our eyes so entirely without the aid of interpreting symbols? I know not why a person's house should not become a kind of memorial of personal history. Or, a journal might be made of the Bible. If you keep a kind of register, so that the text refers to and is associated with the event, your Bible becomes a memorial. You are setting up all the way through its stones of remembrance, as it were. You are providing a record for your old age. And by and by, when you take down your Bible, and put on your glasses, and look back upon your past life, not only will it be the word of God, but you will find how the word of God fed you in the wilderness, strengthened you in sickness, and comforted you in circumstances of discouragement. How many things a man can record on the fly-leaves of his Bible which will afford him pleasure and profit in after life! And how precious that Bible will become to him when he has woven it into his experience as a kind of epitomising of his life. Or, one might, if blessed with means, take the occasions of God's helpfulness to him, and make them also occasions of charity. There are what are called "memorial windows" in churches. Such windows are put in often, by affection, to be the memorial of a wife, or sister, or parent, or child, or friend. In the old country there are a great many of them. One of the most affecting things I ever saw in my life was in the church of the "Succouring" Virgin—that is, of Mary, the Succourer. It was, I believe, in one of the French cities. The whole church was filled with tablets. Here was one of an officer, for three days' deliverance, on such, and such, and such dates. It was a little marble slab let into the wall, inscribed with letters of gold. On inquiring and comparing dates, I found it was during the battle of Inkerman, at a time when the French army were in great danger. The man had been preserved; and when he came back, he put up in this church this tablet, recalling the mercy of God in sparing his life. Another inscription was, "My babe was sick; I called to the Virgin; she heard me; and my child lives." There was the tablet that celebrated that event. And I could not read these inscriptions without having tears fall from my eyes like drops from a spice bush when shaken in a dewy morning. Now, everybody ought to have a church somewhere for himself—not a literal church; but some place where he can celebrate God's special goodness to him. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The place of memorials in the Christian life*:—I. WHAT THE MEMORIAL COMMEMORATED. It

was erected on a battle field where they had been twice defeated. Thus it reminded them of their own 1. Helplessness. But it was also erected on a spot where they had witnessed a great victory, won by God's help. It therefore also reminded them 2. God was their Helper. The stone also commemorated 3. The extent of their victory. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped them," as far as this place. It was a kind of border stone marking their advance on a former position. II. HOW IT HELPED THEM. They called it "Help Stone." In commemorating past help it proved a present help. 1. By keeping them from self-trust. 2. By stimulating their activity. The sight of this stone aroused their patriotism and religious fervour. It was like the flag which stirs the soldier's martial spirit. 3. It deepened their sense of obligation. To retreat from the position marked by this memorial would have been as disgraceful as for an army to lose its standard. III. THE PLACE OF MEMORIAL IN A CHRISTIAN LIFE. A written pledge or a spoken vow is for us what "Help Stone" was for Israel. By that act we warn the enemy that he has no more claim upon the territory of our hearts. And each subsequent communion is a gazing afresh upon the memorial of victory won by Christ. (*R. C. Ford, M.A.*) *God's help*:—1. Observe, the language here of the writer is retrospective. It takes in the wide sweep of the Jewish history. 2. Thus it becomes the language of gratitude. 3. Then, too, consider how the inscription on the stone set up by Samuel, lays a good foundation for hope and trust. And it is upon this help we ground too our faith. The true Christian must always feel deeply humbled at the remembrance of his transgressions, but in the effort of a true repentance he is conscious of God's merciful aid and compassion. The text furnishes a motive for future perseverance. 5. The text indicates that those who are Divinely assisted in their undertaking, will find in the end that their life of labour and of uprightness, as regards both character and conduct, has not been in vain. No. In some matters of an outward kind, at first sight, it may seem that even the most exemplary career has ended in disappointment, in perfect uselessness. 6. Hence arises the duty of co-operation with the help of the Almighty. The builder when furnished with proper materials must use them. It would be downright folly for him to fold his hands, to make no exertion, and only to call aloud for help. The Christian too must take his place in the Church, as in a city, and although he knows that without God's help his watchfulness will be of no use, still he must not sleep at his post. (*W. G. Horwood.*) *The Lord's Helping His people*:—DOCTRINE.—It is the duty of the Lord's people to keep the memorial of the experience which they have of the Lord's helping them. I shall discuss this point under two general heads. I. THE LORD'S HELPING HIS PEOPLE. 1. How doth the Lord help His people? (1.) Sometimes the Lord helps His people, by working all for them, they themselves contributing nothing to their deliverance. Moses said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (2.) Sometimes the Lord assists His people in working. They endeavour their own deliverance in God's way, and He fits them to act, and blesseth their exertions, crowning them with success. (3.) Sometimes God helps His people by appointing means. Thus in the case of Hezekiah, Isaiah said, "Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover." If He intends having His people brought out of Babylon, He raiseth up Cyrus for that purpose. If Elijah must be fed in his hiding place, the ravens shall be employed rather than he suffer want. (4.) Sometimes without means. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." (5.) Sometimes by contrary means, as our Lord cured the blind man by laying clay upon his eyes. 2. Let us inquire why the Lord helpeth His people. (1.) Because they are in covenant with Him. (2.) Because of their special relation to Him. Christ is the believer's head. Hence if the foot be hurt, the Head in heaven cries out (*Acts ix.* 4). (3.) Because they look to Him and trust in Him for their help. The 91st psalm has in it a great many blessed promises, but see to whom they belong. (4.) Because the Lord brings His people into straits for this very end, that He may have the glory of helping them; and that they may get the greater experience of His kindness. II. TO SPEAK OF THE KEEPING UP OF THE MEMORIAL OF THE EXPERIENCES WHICH THEY HAVE HAD OF THE LORD'S HELPING THEM. 1. What it is to keep up the memorial of the Lord's helping us. (1.) It implies an observing of

the dispensations we meet with, for our help in the course of our life. If the thing itself be not observed, we cannot keep up the memorial of it. (2.) A discerning of the Lord's hand in the help we receive. (3.) Laying up these experiences and recording them, if not in a book yet in a faithful memory. "And all they that heard them (the things said of John the Baptist at his birth) laid them up in their hearts, saying, what manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him." Many instead of laying such things up, lay them down in the grave of forgetfulness, and instead of setting up a stone, lay a stone upon them, burying them out of sight. 2. Inquire what of these experiences of the Lord's helping should be recorded and kept in memory. (1.) We should record the timing or seasonableness of them. There is often a weight lies on this very circumstance; that the help came at such a time and not another is worthy to be remembered. (2.) The effects of them on our spirits. How we are affected with them when they come. "Then," says the Church, "was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing." Many times the Lord helps His people in such a manner that the experience of His goodness fills them with shame, looks their doubts and fears out of countenance, proves their unbelief to be a false prophet, and makes them resolve never to distrust God again and fills them with thankfulness. (Isaiah xxxviii. 10, 12; Psal. lxxiii. 22, 23; and cxvi. 11, 12.) O how useful would this be afterwards to the Christian. (3.) Their harmony and agreement with the promise. (4.) Their agreement with their prayers. (Gen. xxiv. 45.) What are the Christian's experiences but returns of prayers. Such was that in the text. This seems to be the ground of that conclusion; "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." Even the very place of our experiences should be recorded. "I will remember thee," says David, "from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar;" (Gen. xxviii. 11—19.). And the Lord loves to have His people remember these blessed places, (Gen. xxxi. 13; and xxxv. 1). Let us now, 3. Inquire why we should keep up the memorial of these things. (1.) We owe this to God: In point, of obedience, when we meet with experiences of His goodness He calls us to set up our Ebenezer. O monstrous ingratitude to forget experiences. We owe it to Him also, in point of compliance with His design in giving experience of His help to His people. God intends His people more comfort by a mercy, than the mercy itself singly considered. He intends it as a ground to hope for more. He gives the valley of Achor for a door of hope. (2.) We owe this to ourselves in point of interest. If we would consult our own advantage, we would not let them slip. For former experiences of the Lord's help are very supporting to the soul in a dark night. These experiences are pledges of further mercies. Some promises have their day of payment here, others after this life. The performing of the former, is an earnest given to faith to look for the other. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The Lord our Help:*—From this passage we are forcibly taught, in the first place: THAT IT IS OUR ESPECIAL DUTY, UNDER THE APPREHENSION OF ANY IMPENDING CALAMITY, TO SEEK UNTO GOD FOR DELIVERANCE BY FERVENT BELIEVING PRAYER. II. WE ARE TAUGHT BY THIS PORTION OF SACRED HISTORY, THAT GOD WILL HEAR THE BELIEVING PRAYERS OF HIS SERVANTS. We are far from affirming that prayers, offered up in faith, and "for things agreeable to God's will," will always be granted in the season or in the manner that the supplicants might either desire, or in their fallible judgment might deem most proper. No! This would be to usurp God's prerogative, and to substitute our own erring judgments in the place of His wise and all-disposing sovereignty. All that God permits us to do, is to approach Him in importunate, believing prayer, leaving the result to His own unerring disposal. III. IT IS OUR DUTY TO RECOGNISE THE HAND OF GOD IN EVERY DELIVERANCE. IV. A PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GRATITUDE IS DUE TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR MERCIES RECEIVED, AND FOR DELIVERANCE FROM IMPENDING EVILS. In perusing the history of the heathen world, we are particularly struck with the practice of perpetuating the memory of great events to future generations. When nations were delivered from impending calamities or favoured with unlooked-for blessings, they raised the song of gratitude to those whom they esteemed their preservers. The praises of their deliverers were sung by the poet, and extolled by the historian; their statues adorned the cities which gave them birth; and other striking memorials were instituted to convey to future generations an abiding sense of the value of their services. If, from the heathen, we turn to the enlightened world, we shall

find that the memorials which, in the one, were erected to the statesman or the conqueror, were, in the other, expressly instituted in token of gratitude to God—the great and only Deliverer. V. LET YOUR RECOLLECTION OF GOD'S PAST MERCIES INSPIRE YOU WITH THE FEELINGS OF FUTURE, UNRESERVED CONFIDENCE. VI. LET ME CALL UPON YOU TO TESTIFY YOUR SENSE OF THE DIVINE MERCIES, BY AN INCREASING DEVOTEDNESS TO THE SERVICE OF YOUR GOD. (*Robert Cook.*) *Retrospection and Gratitude*:—The character of Christian gratitude, &c. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." 1. Christian gratitude is retrospective. 2. Christian gratitude is devout. It connects the thought of God with the travelled past. There may have been second causes: gracious interpositions and friendly agencies; but above and beyond all, the good man recognises the hand of God, and in real devotion says, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." 3. Christian gratitude is joyful. Every event in the providence of God has a message of mercy in it to the good man. Day unto day is saying to him, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and shout aloud for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." 4. Christian gratitude is ever trustful. It speaks thankfully of the past, and looks forward hopefully to the future; hitherto sounds the key-note of hereafter. (*W. G. Barrett.*)

Vers. 15—17. **And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.**—*The prophet judge*:—In the hopeful emergency of Israel's lamenting after Jehovah, "Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel;" and the clear, bright word, and the wise act of that and subsequent days, show him to us as worthy to be a prophet of the Lord, and a judge or ruler of a great people. Great soldiers have been admired for the way in which they have seized the black and bloody opportunity of a crisis in a battle in order to plunge into more successful carnage; but what better is that than the shark's swift and well-timed whirl and dash at its almost escaping prey? How much loftier and demanding what higher gifts and power is the act of him who sees and grasps the opportunity of raising a nation from its almost ruin, and even before the delivering time has come sees the flower of hope blooming among the ruins? Such was Samuel's act in this passage; and such in our own day the hope and deed of Cavour and Victor Emmanuel, who foresaw and made possible the growth of united Italy, at a time when the priests and soldiers had brought the Italy of history to a degradation that only soldiers and priests know the way unto. It is of the greatest importance that we should understand Samuel's arrangements for the national recovery, and apply the principles involved as piously and intelligently as we can. 1. Notice, then, that Samuel's first great act in his character of prophet-judge was to call the people to a thorough religious and moral cleansing: religious in that they were required to disown the idolatry that was in their lives and opposed to the worship of Jehovah; and moral in that the worship of Baal and Astarte was licentious, degrading; vicious in society as well as profane before their God. Samuel required this of them as well as "lamenting after the Lord." Israel needed the true worship of the pure God. Purity of heart, temperance of spirit, chastity of body, righteousness to one another; these things, aimed at for the love of God, are His true worship; these were the true ways of putting from them the false and foul idols that God abhorred. So we have to learn. Mourn after God; be penitent and contrite; but aim after Godlikeness as well. Mourn over your sins, but show the true contrition that seeks to be like God; that says, "I will arise and go to my father." Remember that the invader was in the land; the polluters of the sanctuary still in the sacred places. A soldier "patriot" might have earned renown by military expeditions and dashing raids into the conquered territory; but the dark day of soldier-judges was gone. There was now a man leading who preferred his country's purity to her prosperity, and would have rather seen his nation die than have her prosper with the work and wages of iniquity. Therefore he called them to a national purifying. But the call of Samuel is intended to be to us. For it is not the only duty of a nation to summon its armed bands and squadrons in times of national peril, or international anxiety. Nor is it less than profanity to send armies forth invoking the "God of battles," forgetting that before the barbarity of man shed human blood in war, God was a God of purity, and is to be remembered in war and strife, and before conflict and carnage, as the God of righteousness, who will require unjustly or heedlessly shed blood at the hands of those who have poured it out to cry unto Him from the ground. 2. Samuel's

next great act as a prophet-judge was to summon the people to a great prayer assembly. So distinctly did he put the duty of consecration to God before all things that, instead of military deliberations, instead of holding a great council of war, he said to them, "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord." But this mighty act of penitence and prayer was rudely disturbed. Like the royal and prelatic dragons, that rushed down the mountain side against the meetings of the Scottish Covenanters, to stain the heather with their blood, the Philistines marched swiftly to Mizpeh against their defenceless tributaries. Evidently the Israelites had made no military preparation; and all seemed to threaten that the meeting for prayer and purification would end in a horrible massacre, like many similar meetings in Christian times. The only brave heart there was Samuel's. The best man was the most courageous. Penitence led to prayer, prayer to victory, and victory to praise. Such is our soul's sure way. The prominent feature of the day in connection with Samuel is one that repeatedly shows itself in his life, and that is his character of intercessor. He prayed hopefully when all was gloomy and foreboding, and he did so not because or when he could do nothing else. He did not act as we so often do; he did not make prayer a last resource, but first and foremost he cried unto the Lord. It was for prayer that he assembled the people, and it was while he was uttering his peculiar cry of earnest intercession that the voice of the Lord's thunder was heard. Nor, in thinking of Samuel's prayers and the people's penitence and their efficacy, must we forget the instructive contrast there is between this day of unexpected triumph and the day of battle at the same place; when, notwithstanding the presence of the ark and all the Divinely ordained accompaniments of its mystery when it led the armies of Israel, there was nothing but disaster, disgrace, and death. Under Samuel, without the ark, or priest, or any symbol of the presence of God, Israel's enemies were destroyed and the penitent people delivered. The difference was in the penitence; in the setting of their hearts towards the Lord in contrition and prayer. Ichabod was the word that ended the day of trusting in the ark; but Ebenezer crowned the day of penitence and prayer. 3. Samuel's next great act as a prophet-judge was to consolidate the reformation and prosperity by systematic righteous judgment. "He went from year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places." He was too wise not to know, and too devout not to remember, that a land left with only a military success, and rejoicing chiefly over the damage done to its political rivals, would ever be a temptation to itself, and would expose itself more and more to the perils of military ambition and adventure. History is full of instances of this. Ambition will govern the military nation, and avarice the commercial, with little regard to the God of justice in either. But by judging for God, witnessing regularly to the presence of God's law as he went through the various districts, Samuel prevented the people's penitence being only fugitive, "as the morning cloud and as early dew," and guarded against the perils of their enormous deliverance from foreign oppression. Concentrate the truth of this on the smaller range of your own private lives and personal development. For it is possible that penitence, if only fleeting, and the great kindnesses of God may be made the occasions of greater condemnation. And this grace of knowing the Lord and the revelations of Himself to His earnest souls are not spasmodic, interjectional, and unreliable; for "His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Consolidate your penitence into piety, your thankfulness for deliverance into earnest devotion and regular good doing. Go round your nature, and set everything and every power to the acquirement of "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (G. B. Ryley.) *Samuel the Judge*:—Samuel is a splendid model of sanctified authority. Even as Mount Gideon towers in rugged, regal grandeur above that broad tableland on which the fortunes of the Jewish monarchy were afterwards unrolled, so his strong pure character towers in magnificent sublimity above the fickle, selfish age in which he lived. He was the highest type of a ruler. There are two kinds of authority, that which is sustained by force of arms, and that which is held by force of character. Samuel had the latter; the former is hard to get and hard to keep. It is the possession of tyrants. We have had in these later days a striking illustration of these two kinds of power in the Czar of Russia and the late ex-Emperor of Brazil. A certain writer in commenting on the life of the former says: "No one in the world is so grand a

monarch, and yet no one in the world to-day is more wretched. He knows that the spirit of Nihilism is abroad throughout his vast domains, he fears to see in every face the look of an assassin. Turn now to the other picture, Dom Pedro, for many years the loved and trusted emperor of the Brazilian people, the friend of the oppressed, the emancipator of the slave, the patron of the arts and sciences, who was willing when his people had become, through his own generous influence and training, ripe for a republican form of government, to abdicate his throne and to go uncomplainingly into exile. His was an authority resulting from character. He held a throne within a throne which could not be touched or overthrown by the vicissitudes of a progressing civilisation. The influence of the last of the Brazilian emperors, like the influence of the last of Israel's judges, will be felt throughout successive generations. The authoritative power of a strong, continuous character is a fact familiar to us all. Samuel ruled by virtue of what he was in himself, and he was what he was because of his early training and continuous growth in character. I would like to say a few words about this continuity of righteousness. As a rule the men and women who have the strongest influence in the world to-day are those whose moral characters have been built up from their youth time. I do not wish to say anything that shall discourage those who have emerged from the wild excesses of youth into a manhood comparatively strong and influential. I think of men like Augustine, and John Bunyan, and John Newton, and John Gough, who, having emerged from the fiery furnace of dissipation, went about among their fellow men and, despite the awful scars upon their characters and the smell of fire upon their garments, wielded a mighty influence for good and exercised a moral authority in the world which might have been impossible had they, like Timothy and St. Anthony and Edward the Sixth of England, led lives of unbroken righteousness. And yet these men may be regarded as exceptions to the general law of influence. The wild oats theory is all wrong, the assertion that you must be a profligate and a prodigal before you can be a prince among men is devil's gospel. I have no doubt that the devil over-reaches himself and cheats himself, but in any transaction between you and him he is longer-headed than you are. If you give him a mortgage on your life in the early days, he will be pretty sure to get out of you double the face of your note before he gets through with you. Many a reformed man, many a converted man, is obliged to lament to-day, as Job did, because "the iniquities of his youth" possess him. The sin is forgiven, but the disabled body, the weakened will, the impaired influence, the thought of those who have been led astray by his example, must abide with him. Chaucer, "the bright herald of English song," a man of surpassing abilities, failed to be the power that he might have been because of his early sins. He cried out repeatedly on his deathbed: "Woe is me that I cannot recall and annul these things; but, alas! they are continued from man to man and I cannot do what I desire." I had a letter from one of these unfortunates only a few days ago. He has for many years been yielding to temptation. Again and again he has striven to break away from the thralldom of his past life, but as yet in vain. He says: "I have been on a disastrous downhill slide for the past few weeks; nothing wrong other than dissipation, which ought to be a criminal offence, particularly for me. Sinning and trying to repent seems to be my lot. Why cannot I be saved?" The difference between a character that has grown up into a matured strength from early goodness and purity and that which results from some sudden and violent conversion after years of weakening excesses is like the difference between the stalactite and the icicle: they look much alike, they are formed by the same forces of nature; but the one is many years forming, and the other grows in a night-time. Keep the icicle under right conditions of temperature and it remains, like the stalactite, solid and beautiful; but change these conditions, put the two together under the burning heat of the sun, and the creation of a night-time will melt away, while the deposit of many years will be strong and solid still. The prince among men who is the greatest moral power in the world to-day, the man who can do the most in moderating and guiding the passions of his fellow men, who is best able to help the weak and encourage the faint, and who impresses his character upon the age in which he lives, is the man who, like Samuel, can look back through middle age and youth and childhood upon a life which has been clean and true. (*C. A. Dickinson.*) *Samuel the Ruler*:—Other books—the works of great men and possessed of great merit—have been written for the use of princes in training for a throne; but in pre-

ference to all such, were we a prince's tutor, we should select the Bible; and for a pattern for rulers him whose name stands at the head of this chapter. America boasts her Washington; England her Hampden; Scotland her Wallace; Greece and Rome their patriots or patriot-kings; but among the few illustrious men whose deeds shine in the annals and whose names are embalmed in the heart of nations, where, in all history, sacred or profane, is there one so eminently fitted to rule as Samuel—who presents such a remarkable combination of mental power, the purest patriotism, and the highest piety? 1. He was a patriotic ruler. (1.) His object was not the possession of power—that for which so many kings and statesmen have had recourse to the meanest devices. How basely did Henry IV. desert the sacred cause for which, his white plume dancing in the thick of the fight, he had often led his followers to battle! And from him who embraced Popery to win Paris, and, with its gay capital, the kingdom and crown of France, to such as by bribery have purchased meaner offices, what sacrifices of conscience, and virtue, and truth, have been offered at the shrine of power! The crimes which some have committed to gain it have been without a parallel, unless those which others have committed to retain it. Unlike that grand old Roman who threw up the helm of the state and retired to plough his paternal acres, how many has the world seen clinging to power as a drowning man to a plank; and to retain possession of it, resorting to the most dishonourable and vilest means! For this purpose, once and again the sword of Joab was plunged into the heart of a rival; to prop up his throne, Charles I., in Stafford, gave the neck of a devoted friend to the headsman's axe; to secure their places and appease an angry crowd, a British ministry cast an admiral of the fleet to the mob, and hanged him up before the sun; and Richelieu, a cardinal of the Church, and chief minister of France, arranged that her armies should suffer an ignominious defeat—scrupling not, rather than that he should lose his place, that thousands of his gallant countrymen should lose their lives, and cement with their blood the tottering fabric of his power. In the crooked policy they have pursued to gain or to retain place and power, what base things have great men done, and what bad things good men! A finer contrast to the general character of the princes and statesmen, and, whether they occupied a high or a low place, of the rulers of this world, we cannot imagine than that which Samuel presents. Place, honour, and power sought him, not he them. He became the judge of Israel, or its ruler, at the call of God; and when, without respect to his grey hairs and long years of honourable, successful service, an ungrateful country called him to resign his office, like the sun which looks largest at its setting, he never seems so great, so grand, as in the last scenes of his public life. 2. His object was not his own personal aggrandisement. "*L'état, c'est moi*" ("The State, it is I"), said Louis XIV. to one who happened to speak in his presence of the interests of the State. A striking picture that of one who, though called "the great," was an incarnation of the worst passions of human nature—of selfishness, pride, heartless cruelty, insatiable ambition, and abominable lust!—a truer picture, though drawn by his own hand, than any left by Bossuet, or Massillon, or the other flatterers of a bloody tyrant and ruthless persecutor of God's heritage. We meet with no such scenes under the rule of Samuel. Unlike those that had preceded, or were to follow, the sword slept in its scabbard all the days of Samuel—that great battle excepted which inaugurated his reign, and was won by his prayers. Under his government—Samuel himself the highest example of it—piety flourished; the stream of justice ran pure; the rights of all classes were respected; private property was safe; and the public burdens, pressing lightly, were easily borne by a prosperous people. I can fancy, when old men described the happy and quiet life they led in the good days of Samuel, how many felt that when their fathers clamoured for a king, on that occasion, as old Bishop Latimer said of another, the *vox populi* was rather the *vox diaboli* than the *vox Dei*—the voice of the devil than the voice of God. 2. Samuel was a pious, as well as patriotic, ruler. It would appear that in the rudest times of old an altar always rose near the throne; and that an indispensable part of every palace was the chapel, where he to whom others knelt, knelt to God; and learned to remember that there was One above him whose throne overshadowed his; at whose mercy-seat kings had to seek for mercy; whose laws were to form the rule, and his glory the chief end of their government. Simply the vicegerent of God, and no king, Samuel had no place in Israel; the palace, if such it could be called, was the tabernacle, where God dwelt within the curtains of the holy place. No armed guards protected the person, nor gorgeous retinue.

attended the steps of Samuel. No pomp of royalty disturbed the simple manner of his life, or distinguished him from other men; yet there rose by his house in Ramah that which proclaimed to all the land the personal character of its ruler, and the principles on which he was to conduct his government. In a way not to be mistaken, Samuel associated the throne with the altar; earthly power with piety; the good of the country with the glory of God. "He judged Israel," it is said, "all the days of his life, and went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgah, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all these places; and his return was to Ramah, for there was his house, and there he judged Israel, and there," it is added, "he built an altar unto the Lord." That altar had a voice no man could mistake. In a manner more expressive than proclamation made by the voice of royal heralds with painted tabards and sounding trumpets, it proclaimed to the tribes of Israel that piety was to be the character, and the will of God the rule, of his government. What an example Samuel presents to our magistrates, our judges, our members of parliament—to all entrusted with authority, and how should all who love their God and country pray that every post of honour and of public trust may be filled with a man of the type of Samuel! Religion is the root of honour; piety the only true foundation of patriotism; and the best defence of a country, a people nursed up in godliness—of such virtue, energy, and high morale, that, animated with a courage which raises them above the fear of death, they may be exterminated, but cannot be subdued. It is not, as some allege, our blood, with its happy mixture of Celtic, Saxon, and Scandinavian elements, but the religion of our island—our Bibles, our schools, our Sabbaths, our churches, and our Christian homes—which, more than any and than all things else, has formed the character of its inhabitants; and to that more than to the genius of its statesmen, or to its fleets and armies, Britain owes her unexampled prosperity, and the peace that has brooded for a hundred years unbroken on her sea-girt shores. (T. Guthrie, D.D.) *The judge in circuit; or, religion in business*:—In every State much depends on the proper administration of justice, and it is of the first consequence to sustain it incorrupt. It is with the body politic as with the individual. Regard must be had to those secondary laws which influence health and contribute to our fitness for discharging ordinary duties. If we pay no respect to the laws of diet, exercise, and ventilation, by which health is conserved, we become unable to perform our business, the internal economy is deranged, and all the members of the body suffer. In society there are principles that regulate order and prosperity, which cannot with impunity be set aside. If the administration of justice be neglected or perverted, liberty and religion must seriously suffer. But when religion is revived, it is of vast moment to bring all civil affairs under its purifying influence. Without this, religious ceremonies would serve as cloaks for sin, and liberty excuse licentiousness. It was, therefore, the great business of Samuel, when by God's blessing he had godliness recovered and national order re-established, to free the judgment-seat from corruption, and to make it a respect and a dread through all the land. The civil government of Israel was peculiar. It had its origin from God, and was as much a Divine institution as the Church itself. Jehovah was their lawgiver and king, both in Church and State. Church and State being co-extensive in Israel, the Levites acquired a large share in the administration of justice. In the days of David, we read that six thousand of the Levites were officers and judges (1 Chron. xxiii. 4), in addition to the number employed in the tabernacle service. Members of the State were subject to the law of the Church, and the members of the Church were citizens. Religious error was criminal in civil law. Idolatry was treason, for God was their king. Offences against society were subject to ecclesiastical censure, and cut off the guilty from the congregation of the Lord. The two forms of government were mutually helpful and inter-dependent. The revival of piety purified the State, and spiritual officers led rulers to reform. Samuel was a Levite, and was devoted to the sanctuary by the circumstances of his birth. But he also discharged high civil offices on account of the position into which he was providentially raised. He officiated as a priest, and he ruled as a judge. Samuel was an upright and godly judge. There is a danger of separating the official from the personal character, and whenever this is done the individual is seriously injured. There have been good men who have been bad judges, and bad men who have made respectable judges. There is another danger to which a judge is exposed, when he is tempted to indulge personal feelings while seated where impartial judgment should be given. It is recorded of Aristides, one of the brightest names in ancient Greece, and a man to

whom his contemporaries awarded the title of "the Just," that when he was a judge between two private persons, "one of them declared that his adversary had greatly injured Aristides." He thus hoped to awaken the personal feelings of the judge against his opponent and secure a verdict favourable to himself. But the just judge replied, "Relate rather what wrong he hath done to thee, for it is thy cause, not mine, that I now sit judge of." Private feelings may, however, sometimes be tried severely. When Brutus had to occupy the seat of justice and his two sons were placed at the bar charged with treason against the State, it was trying for the patriot to set aside the parent, and for duty to act against affection. But the majesty of law prevailed over the emotions of kindred, and the spectators are said to have gazed more at the judge than on the culprits on that august occasion, and to have regarded the scene as a most illustrious exhibition of moral heroism. Party feeling is another danger to which judges are exposed. When Richard Baxter had to bear the coarse ribaldry and unjust judgment of Jeffreys, it was evident that party feeling ruled the decision of that wicked man. A judge should be upright, and Samuel brought to the judicial seat a character fitted for the high office he had to discharge. The altar was beside his bench and his home. The profession of his faith was beside his robe of office. The believer was in the judge. He connected the official with the personal so intimately that he could not be a godly man without also being at the same time an upright judge. Nor has he stood alone in the lives of judges. Sir Matthew Hale was a man after Samuel's pattern. Under the power of godliness and familiar with the word of God, he sought to evidence the principles of religion in the practice of his profession. When he was an advocate, he would not plead a cause, if he were convinced of its injustice; and when he rose to the bench and was Chief Baron of the Exchequer he was noted for the impartiality of his decisions. A peer of the realm who had a case in court once called upon him to give him private information, that he might have fuller understanding of it when it was brought up for judgment. Sir Matthew is reported to have said that "he did not deal fairly to come to his chamber about such affairs, for he never received any information of causes but in open court, where both parties were to be heard alike." The duke complained to the king; but his majesty observed, that "he believed he would have used himself no better, if he had gone to solicit him in any of his causes." Sir Matthew feared God and regarded man, but his integrity of righteous action was not to be sacrificed. Samuel did not forget whose law it was which he dispensed, whose worship he observed, whose altar was at his house. After the fatigue of official duty, the exercise of devotion at the family altar was sweet refreshment. Before entering upon the anxieties of judgment or the vexation of litigation, domestic worship was his best preparation. Amidst the difficulties of the conflicting cases before him he would remember the altar, and seek wisdom requisite for the occasion from the Lord most high. Secular engagements did not pervert his godliness, or lead him to neglect family worship. He could come from the strife of tongues to the peace-speaking blood, and approach with humble faith the altar of his God. That is not a complete house which is without an altar. It may have a hearth to warm, and accommodation to suit the body, but it has not that which likens it, as it links it to heaven. You may have a respectable business, and conduct it well, and yet want what blesses it—a domestic altar. A house without an altar lacks its brightest ornament, its clearest light, its best principle, and its sure consecration. But where the altar is in the house it has a safety lamp. Numerous have been the testimonies to the value of the domestic altar. (*R. Steel.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1-3. And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.—*Parental trials*:—The best sometimes meet with the bitterest disappointment, and their grey hairs are brought down with sorrow to the grave by the unprincipled conduct of their sons. The most exemplary home has become a place of weeping by the unexpected misconduct of those who were its brightest ornaments. Samuel was now growing old. Those

in high positions are naturally wishful that their sons should sustain a father's name and exercise a similar influence. Samuel had that laudable desire, and he made his sons judges over Israel. Nepotism has been one of the grossest scandals of most Roman pontiffs, and not a few high functionaries in every land. But there are honourable exceptions. It is not said that Samuel did wrong in appointing his sons to the judicial bench. The people never accused him of nepotism. Sons of such a sire would promise hopefully for the administration of justice. But the fairest sky may have a darkening cloud, the brightest buds may be early blighted, and a hopeful spring result in a scanty harvest; so the conduct of Samuel's sons disappointed a father's heart, and troubled the land of Israel. 1. They did not walk in their father's ways. They misimproved the bright example they had before them at home, where they saw little that would tend to blind their minds or pervert their hearts. When we consider Eli's softness and incapacity for command, we do not wonder at his sons going astray. But Samuel was so firm, yet generous withal, that it indicated great depravity in his sons to abuse the example of their father's spotless life. Their conduct showed that they had sought no personal religion, but had trusted to what they joined in at the family altar. Hence, when they left the sacred enclosures of the domestic circle at Ramah, they had no principle of restraint. What must the eternal experience be but remorse, anguish, and despair, to those who, in time, daily beheld a Christian parent, yet never personally sought the Saviour? 2. They "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes." The qualifications of a judge are thus specified by Jethro to Moses (Exod. xviii. 21). Moses thus commanded the people in the name of the Lord (Deut. xvi. 18, 19). But the sons of Samuel did not fulfil these requirements. They were led astray by the love of money. It is amazing how speedily this sin of covetousness perverts the moral faculties. Gold, unlawfully got, sears the conscience. Perhaps there was not a greater man in his own age, or in any age, than Lord Bacon. He is the father of modern philosophy, and revolutionized the inquiries of the schools. To him more than to any man is the student of nature and of science indebted. He conferred a lasting benefit on mankind by opening up the true method of inquiry. Yet, strange to relate, Lord Bacon was one of the most unscrupulous lawyers, and one of the most disreputable judges that ever sat on the English bench. His place-hunting was most dishonourable; and, after having become, by the most ignoble means, Lord High Chancellor, he degraded the highest legal office in the country by taking bribes. So glaring was the evil, and so notorious, that this philosopher, who had written so much in praise of learning, virtue, and religion, was impeached by the House of Commons, and found guilty of receiving bribes to the amount of £100,000! It must have been a most humiliating spectacle to see such a man as Bacon confessing to his peers that he had been guilty of corruption. "This glimpse of the rise and fall of this great man proclaims aloud the insufficiency of all but the grace and truth of God to keep man morally erect. Not gigantic intellectual powers—had these sufficed, Bacon would have been steadfast as a rock; not worldly success—Bacon sat at the right hand of royalty, and kept the conscience of a king; not great trust—the Lord High Chancellor of England was the foremost subject in that respect; not celebrity—with that Bacon might have been satiated; not greatness without goodness—that is a tinkling cymhal. What, then? The answer which experience, history, and the word of God combine to give is this—'I am what I am, by the grace of God that is in me.' The man who dims the light of that lamp which was kindled in heaven has already tottered to his fall." Thus acted the sons of Samuel. 3. They "perverted judgment." This was the natural consequence of the course they pursued. It was not justice, but profit which they sought. Their decision was not what the law of God demanded, but what they were best rewarded to decree. Their conduct was most offensive to God: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvii. 15). Samuel was a disappointed father. He had evidently hoped that his sons might fill his place when his days were ended. There is nothing that distresses a parent more than the misconduct of a son. It was the grief of Isaac when Esau associated with idolaters, and despised the patriarchal birthright. It made many of Jacob's years a perennial sorrow. It was Aaron's trial soon after the priesthood had been settled on his house, when Nadab and Abihu went drunk to the altar, and offered strange fire to God. It was Eli's calamity and punishment, as his reckless sons, whom he had never restrained, rushed on the ruin of his house. It was David's sorest

wounding, when one of his sons after another wrought folly and wickedness in Israel. Sons should consider the necessity of a personal religion, by means of which the best wishes of a parent may be realised, and the individual happiness of a soul secured. Without this you may be drifted by every wind, like a boat without a rudder; you may be borne along a current of evil. (*R. Steel.*) *The minister's family*:—The minister's family should be an example to all his congregation. It cannot fail to give high value to his exhortations. It did so in the case of the devoted Alleine, of whom this testimony is given, that, "as he walked about the house, he would make some spiritual use of everything that did occur; and his lips did drop as an honey-comb to all that were about him." Cotton Mather is renowned for his admirably managed family, and his children rose up to call him blessed, while his ministry was largely owned of God. Philip Henry's domestic life is well known; and his son Matthew, the commentator, ascribes with gratitude his own Christian character to godly parental training. Nor are these solitary examples. Many more might easily be adduced in illustration of pious training. Eli neglected this, disobeyed the Lord, and injured his sons. (*R. Steel.*) **But turned aside after lucre and took bribes.**—*Political corruption*:—From the earliest periods of the world's history corruption among public men has brought on political troubles and national ruin. It is wide-spread—it is everywhere. This deplorable state of things may be remedied:—I. By FILLING THE SUBORDINATE OFFICES WITH MEN WHOSE FITNESS HAS BEEN PROVED BY COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION. II. THE CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE SHOULD BE CHOSEN BECAUSE OF CHARACTER AND QUALIFICATIONS. III. MONOPOLIES, WHETHER CORPORATE OR INDIVIDUAL, SHOULD BE REGULATED SO AS TO PROTECT FULLY PUBLIC RIGHTS. (*Homiletic Review.*) *Bribery*:—My charge is to you, in all departments of life, steer clear of bribery, all of you. Every man and woman at some time will be tempted to do wrong for compensation. The bribe may not be offered in money. It may be offered in social position. Let us remember that there is a day coming when the most secret transaction of private life and of public life will come up for public reprehension. We cannot bribe death, cannot bribe sickness, we cannot bribe the grave, we cannot bribe the judgments of that God who thunders in my text, "Fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery." "Fire?" said Cardinal Beaufort, "fire? Can't Death be hired? Is money nothing? Must I die, and so rich?" You can tell from what they say in their last hours that one of their chief sorrows is that they have to leave their money. I break that delusion. I tell that bribe-taker that he will take his money with him. God will wrap it up in your shroud, or put it into the palm of your hand in resurrection, and there it will lie, not the cool, bright, shining gold at it was on the day when you sold your vote and your moral principle; but there it will lie, a hot metal burning and consuming your hand for ever. Or, if there be enough of it for a chain, then it will fall from the wrist, clanking the fetters of an eternal captivity. The bribe is an everlasting possession; you take it for time, you take it for eternity. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 4, 20. **Make us a king to judge us like all the nations.**—*Making a king*:—As a matter of public notoriety, Samuel's sons were not like Samuel himself in their moral tone and in their moral example. This brings before us a sad and humiliating fact—that the children of great men and of good men are not always worthy of their parentage. There are men who can speak to a thousand hearers, who are utterly weak and powerless when they come into the details of common life and have to teach a single child at home, and show the light of God upon the private paths of life. Consequently, their own garden-wall is broken down, their own little flower-bed at home is all weed-grown, whilst they are busy with the great public fields and the great vineyards of the world. 1. This brings before us the equally remarkable fact that grace is not hereditary. When we see a good man we expect his children to be like himself. But grace does not descend in the family line. The father may be an apostle, the son may be a blasphemer. There are circumstances, no doubt, in which at the very moment that the father has been preaching the gospel, his own son, whom he loved as his life, has been fulfilling some profane engagement, has been blaspheming the name of the God of his fathers! The elders of Israel had a case. They were concerned for the nation; they saw the two sons of Samuel going astray from their father's paths; they came to the man when he was old, and told him about the apostasy of his sons. They said, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." If ever

men apparently had a simple, straightforward, common-sense case, the elders of Israel had such a case. Samuel heard this statement, and the thing displeased him. No man likes to see his whole life disregarded, and his power thrown away ruthlessly. After all, there is a good deal of human nature and common sense in the old man's view of the changes which are proposed to him. He started from a given point; he has worked along a certain line; a man cannot disinherit and dispossess himself of all his own learning, culture, traditions, and associations, and go back again or go forward into the infancy of new and startling movements. It would be well if men could learn this more profoundly. Young Englandism and young Americanism must be very distasteful to old Samuels, high-priests, and venerable prophets. We shall show our strength by showing our moderation; we shall be most mighty when we are most yielding! Samuel told the Lord about it. This is very startling to those who live at a far distance from God. These old men seem always to have been living, as it were, next door to him, and had but to whisper and they were heard. It is a kind of breathing process, it is ready, spontaneous as love. Samuel turned towards the elders of Israel, heard their story, then turned his face about and told God concerning the whole thing. It is a wonderful kind of life—God always so nigh at hand. 2. Samuel saw the outside of the case. Samuel saw what we now call the fact of the case; God saw the truth of it. Many people do not distinguish between fact and truth. There is an infinite difference between fact and truth. Fact is the thing done, the thing visible, the thing that has shape, and that can be approached and touched. Truth underlies it. We must get at the truth before we can understand the fact itself. This is ever necessary, but specially needful where matters are complicated by profoundly moral considerations. The Lord explained the case to Samuel. He said, in effect: "They are only making a tool of thee; thou art become to them a mere convenience, or as it were a scapegoat. They profess to be very deeply concerned about the moral apostasy of thy sons; they do not care one pin-point about it; they are extremely glad to be able to seize upon anything that will seem to give a good colouring to their case. Samuel, Israel has cast off its God. Is it wonderful, then, that Israel should cast off the servant?" What an explanation this is! how it goes to the root and core! What a subject opens upon us here! The great world of excuses, social explanations, the faces which things are made to wear, the visors and disguises which are set upon life in order to conceal its corruption, its leprosy, its death. Truly the word of God is sharp and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword! So there are two judgments in the world. Man makes out his own case, God comes with the explanation. Man cheats man with outside appearances; afterwards God holds the light over the case. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do! 3. The Lord told Samuel to make the people a king. "Hear them; do what they ask; hearken unto their voice; howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." This is an instruction that we should do well to carry out in all life. There are times when we are pressed into certain courses; when all we can do is to protest. What then? When they heard the speech they said, "Nay; but we will have a king over us." Observe how men can fight their way, when so determined, through all the warnings that even God can send. Observe, man can have his way. There is a point at which even God withdraws from the contest. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." If we be so minded, we can force our way through all solemn warning, all pathetic entreaty, all earnest persuasiveness on the part of friend, wife, husband, teacher, preacher, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost! We can go to hell if we will! There is a grim, ghastly cross—hew it down! There is a way round it, a way through it, a way over it—you can get there! Fool, coward! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Israel asking for a king*:—Wishing to resemble other nations, they asked Samuel to make them a king. They "were dazzled," says John Henry Newman, "with the pomp and splendour of the heathen monarchs around them, and they desired someone to fight their battles, some visible succour to depend on, instead of having to wait for an invisible Providence, which came in its own way and time, by little and little, being dispensed silently, or tardily, or (as they might consider) unsuitably. We must notice the way in which the elders expressed their wish to Samuel. They felt it necessary to show some reason, if possible, for their action. They therefore began by reminding Samuel of his advancing years. A Greek proverb says, "The more a good tree grows, the more shade does it give."

Samuel was not too old for service, but the wayward people whom the elders represented (v. 19) were apparently tired of his administration. Aged people should be treated very gently and not spoken to as if we thought they were in our way. The latter part of the speech of the elders was no more welcome than its beginning. Their request was an affront. But he did not resent it. Instead of at once answering them he prayed unto the Lord. Luther says, "He must be of a high and great spirit, that undertakes to serve the people in body and soul, for he must suffer the utmost danger and unthankfulness." Samuel was "of a high and great spirit." Instead of brooding over the personal wrong done to himself, he went quietly into God's presence and laid the whole case before Him. Have we difficulties that we cannot solve? Let us pray. Cecil says, "No man rejects a minister of God who faithfully performs his office, till he has rejected God." This remark applies to all spheres of life. The strict performance of duty often results in personal loss. Take the case of a young man suddenly dismissed by an unscrupulous tradesman because he refuses to take undue advantage of a customer. That young man should hear God's voice saying, "Your master has not rejected you, he has rejected Me." With this thought in his heart he will be able cheerfully to suffer (Ps. lxxix. 7; Col. i. 24). Israel's request was granted, but at the same time the people were earnestly warned of their error. God's sovereignty and man's free will are here vividly contrasted. Apparently the people gained their point, but really they were making a rod for their own back (Ps. lxxviii. 29-31; cvi. 15.) "How bitterly the nation, even in the successful and glorious reign of King Solomon, felt the pressure of the royal yoke, so truly foretold by their last judge, is shown in the history of the times which followed the death of Solomon, when the public discontent at the brilliant but despotic rule of the great king, split up the people into two nations" (Kings xii. 4). Sir William Temple says "A restlessness in men's minds to be something that they are not and to have something that they have not, is the root of all immorality." William Collins, the artist, very decidedly expresses his opinion "that if the Almighty were to give us everything for which we feel desirous, we should as often find it necessary to pray to Him to take away as to grant new favours." We have read perhaps of the little stream that began to feel weary of being a simple brook. It therefore "asked for snows from the mountains, water from the torrents, rain from the tempests; until, its petitions granted, it burst its bounds, and ravaged its hitherto delightful banks. At first the proud stream exulted in its force; but seeing ere long that it carried desolation in its flow, that its progress was now doomed to solitude, and that its waters were for ever turbid, it came to regret the humble bed hollowed out for it by Nature—the birds, the flowers, the trees, and the brooks, hitherto the modest companions of its tranquil course." (*M. Lucas.*)

A king instead of a god:—The history now moves in one great step to Samuel's old age. Of his marriage, family life, and the gathering round him of the manifold affection for which such a nature as his must have been beautifully fitted, we know nothing. If we have any hint, it is in the naming of the two sons who are mentioned in this chapter. In the same spirit as that in which he named the place of victory—Ebenezer—Samuel called his first-born son Joel; that is—Jehovah is God. This must have been as a protest against the idolatry, the Baal and Astarte worship, with which Israel had been infected and polluted. Samuel named his other son Abiah; that is—Jehovah is Father. This ought to obtain from us admiring and reverent regard as we think of the fragmentary suggestions of Samuel's family life. Jehovah was truly God over all, blessed for evermore; Dagon, Baal, and Astarte embodied only the inane and foul misconceptions of man's nature and God's demands. They were as naught before the God of gods. But more: Jehovah was a Father, tender and true to home and nation, to heathen and Jew. And this double truth it is that the naming of Samuel's sons betokens. For the first time in the Old Testament the recognition of this foundation doctrine is announced to us, as it was many a time subsequently, by names devised in a time of deep feeling and earnest consecration of heart and home to God. This is the first recorded evidence of an endeavour to witness to the assurance of the adoption, to cry Abba, Father! Both the sons of Samuel were destined, in their father's thought, to be living witnesses to the Lord: one to the greatness of God and the other to the gentleness of the Most High. In spirit this act of Samuel is no more than should be the feeling and purpose of all spiritually-minded parents in their thoughts of their children. As we often give the children an ancestral name that we revere, or honour them by naming them after someone whom we

esteem in public or private life, so our first and deepest thoughts of the children should be the longing and purpose that they may truly live to the honour of God, and carry, as it were, "His name in their foreheads." This should mark our chief hopes and efforts on their behalf. But here we come to what so often is a cause of grief, and sad, heart-wearing disappointment. With such a man for their father as Samuel, and carrying in the very singularity of their names the marks of a high designation as plainly as a Brahmin carries the marks of his caste, we might have expected that they would have felt a restraint from sin, and an inspiration to rectitude and holiness that would have made them, at the least, worthy of their father and grandmother. The grandsons of Hannah and the sons of Samuel—Joel and Abiah—ought to have been like Timothy, whose "unfeigned faith" dwelt first "in thy grandmother, Lois, and thy mother, Eunice." From the first son of man, who was a murderer, down to the present time, good men's children, or, as here, ministers' sons, have not been proverbial for increasing the piety of the world, or lessening its sin. The child of a saint needs the forgiveness its father has found; and the son of a sinner is not, on account of his awful parentage, placed at a disadvantage with God. Still, in view of Samuel's sons, the remembrance will come that Samuel's pain and David's wail have been the sadness of many a saintly man. Samuel could not have indulged his sons in sin. The history leads us rather to think that the sins were such as might not reveal themselves until the public life of judging in Beersheba came. The private lives of Joel and Abiah may not have given opportunity for the grave sins that marked their judicial position. Many a man lives a good life as a private person who would be a great sinner if exposed to the hazards of public life. Napoleon I. might have lived and died a decent man had he lived only in privacy, and never entered the army. To such a being the command of men with muskets and swords in their hands was like the scent of blood to a tiger. Judge Jeffreys might not have been infamous if he had never been a judge. The sin of Eli's sons was unchastity; that of Samuel's sons was covetousness. Young men, you may not fall as Hophni and Phinehas did; take care that you do not sin as Joel and Abiah. The weak link may not have had to bear the strain with you. Life may soon have to bear the test on your weak side. May God keep you from yielding when the pressure comes. 1. The sin of Samuel's sons brought swiftly on a national crisis. The old-fashioned theocratic commonwealth would not do any longer. They would have soldier-kings, and they got them; but how many of them were better than Joel or Abiah, or even superior to Hophni and Phinehas? Very few. And from the first to the last of them, who of all the kings was fit to stand with Samuel? The truth is, that, from the first, the God-governed commonwealth that was associated with such names as Moses and Samuel was a conception of political and social order that the Jews never cared to appreciate. Even before Samuel's time, the Hebrews had shown unwholesome longing for visible military kingship and rule such as the heathen around them had. When Gideon, at the call of God, led them to victory the only use of the victory they made was atheistically to say to Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son and thy son's son also"; and the better judgment, the holier manhood of Gideon, is seen in his answer, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." Gideon and Cromwell have tried to teach men in nations to trust and obey God the Infinite more than to admire lucky soldiers and successful adventurers. Soldier-kings and nationalities, held together by the sword, are not God's preferred agencies in working out the history of humanity. Rather are they His scourges and penalties; and, like all other devastating powers, are not to be for ever, but have their highest functions, as the fire-dressing of a farm field, only in being preliminary to more rational and Divine processes of life and growth, instead of fire and death. To something higher than the sad miseries of the soldier-monarchies that succeeded Samuel, to the ideal kingdom of the ever-present God on earth, it was that Isaiah pointed the Jews in the days "when kings went forth to battle." "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us." But this was precisely what the faithless Hebrews would not believe. 2. The spirit and unworthiness of the movement may be seen in this—That they asked not counsel of the Lord, nor of Samuel. The history of this demand, and the outworking of it in the progress of the monarchy, are illustrations of the rebellion and the sinfulness of hiding counsel from the Lord. We, especially, who profess to sing the Ebenezers of Divine deliverance, must go on to seek the guidance of the Divine wisdom in all things; trusting in the Lord with all

our hearts, leaning not to our own understanding; in all our ways acknowledging Him and hoping that He will direct our paths. 3. The folly as well as the sin of the project will be further seen from remembering that God had chosen them to be alone and the guide of all the nations; but their self-degrading demand was to be as the nations. They may have been caught by the false glare and splendour of the monarchies around them, as well as moved by the fear of Nahash, King of the Ammonites. More certainly they ignored the high intention of God in establishing His own regal authority among them; and, ignoring the higher destiny, they fell into a lower degradation than that of their neighbours. For a nation to forget its mission as the most liberal and hopeful people of the earth, and descend to the infamous degradation of being mere traders and gun-makers and lenders of money to anyone who will give interest enough, as England seems to be doing—this is an abdication, a self-degrading, vast and solemn enough to make a crisis in the history of the world; and is as fit a theme for religious thought and solemn, prayerful consideration as anything that ever happened in the history of Israel. 4. Moreover, it is evident from the history that the pernicious influence of international rivalry was at work among the elders of Israel—rivalry, that is, chiefly in means of making war. To be as, or better than, other nations in war power is a poor ambition, and does no good to any in the long run, but rather evil all round. A boy never had a knife without wanting to cut something with it, and, as likely as not, something that did not need cutting. So, too, a nation, or, rather, a military caste never has a big gun now without wanting to shoot it; and, more likely than not, it will fire at something that did not need shooting. If, now, you look at the national life represented on the one hand by the judge and on the other by the military king, you may find sufficient explanation of the rejection of Samuel and God, deeper down than the occasion given for the rejection by the injustice of Samuel's sons, at Beersheba. The judgeship under Samuel was the rule of right, and knowledge and regard, above all things, to the ends that God had in view. The soldier-kingship was the showy rule of the strong hand, in which "the elders" who came to Samuel would have chief gain, and the people would be pleased by having the outward and visible signs of greatness and strength that in politics and religion so often do duty for the reality long after it has departed. Plain principles of eternal righteousness, where have they ever stood half so high in popular esteem, and the desires of privileged classes, as the gaudy pretentiousness of the uniformed soldier and priest? Certainly they never did among the Jews; and they do not, I fear, among us nowadays. (*G. B. Ryley.*) *The disaffected people:*—There is scarcely anything more trying to a father than to witness the moral shipwreck of his sons. But this personal trouble was intimately connected with a more overwhelming one—the disaffection and declension of the people. While this man of God was lamenting his domestic trial and his country's loss by reason of the conduct of his sons, a deputation of the people was introduced to state the popular wish, and to ask political changes. They had seen the growing infirmities of Samuel; they had suffered from the dishonesty of his sons; they probably feared the consequences if their leader were taken away; therefore they solicited a thorough change in their civil polity: "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Their government was theocratic. God was their king. But the people of Israel did not possess the same license with regard to government as other nations. They were bound to consult the will of God, and seek Divine approbation of their arrangements. They did not like to be so isolated, so peculiar; they grew weary of the ways of God. Conformity to the world has been always a great snare to the Church. Natural to the sinful heart, it tempts the imperfect, and has led many a fair professor into backsliding. Conformity to the world, united to a profession of faith, has been the stumbling-block to many an awakened soul. It troubles the Church, but it does not induce the world to be godly. The most ungodly know well how to estimate this conformity in those who profess the faith of Christ. They consider it an attempt to serve two masters. It does not attract them towards, but repels them from, religion. It strengthens their opinion of the superstition of worship, and of the hypocrisy of religionists. Samuel was above these infirmities of ignoble minds. But he knew the theory of the national government was well acquainted with past history, and aware that self-willed reforms were neither healthy nor good. The circumstances occasioning it was to him most affecting—the misconduct of his sons. Consciousness of his growing infirmities contributed to try the feelings of this man of God. But he had a resource where he could find com-

posure, counsel, and strength: "And Samuel prayed unto the Lord." Prayer was to him the exercise of communion with God. As you would consult a tried friend in your difficult circumstances, and be comforted and strengthened by his prudent advice, so did Samuel with God when Providences were dark and the path of duty not plain. Prayer to God was the constant resource of Moses ere he spoke to the people, and hence it was only once throughout forty years of difficult leadership in the weary wilderness that he is said to have spoken "unadvisedly with his lips." Nehemiah found his soul strengthened by ejaculatory prayer while he was considering what answer he should make to the king Artaxerxes. This was Samuel's practice, and it made his words cautious and weighty. No man can be so much engrossed as to have no time for prayer. The eminent physician Boerhaave, whose practice was so great that "even Peter the Great used to remain for hours in an ante-chamber before he could be admitted to an interview, was wont to devote the first hour of every day to prayer;" and he recommended this practice to others, "as the source of that vigour which carried him through all his toils." Learn from Samuel how to act in seasons of perplexity. It is vain to place happiness in the present world. The Israelites imagined that their temporal aggrandizement would be to their advantage; that a king, and a pompous retinue behind him, would greatly enhance their importance. But God taught them that the desire was sinful, and the result disappointing. Byron sought early gratifications, and by means of his lofty titles, splendid genius, and jovial tastes, had abundant means of gratifying his large capacity for pleasure; but he wrote, as the result of all, that he—"Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump of fame: drank early—deeply drank—drank draughts that common millions would have quenched; then died of thirst, because there was no more to drink." The great novelist, Sir Walter Scott, had as brilliant a career as any *litterateur*. But he who gratified tens of thousands was not a happy man, and in the closing scene of his life had no abiding joy. His hopes had been blighted. His happiness had been eclipsed. His fortune had vanished. He was impoverished, embarrassed, aged, and comfortless. And under the influence of these unhappy experiences, he said, as he sat at Abbotsford, "When I think of what this place now is, compared with what it has been not long ago, I think my heart will break." "I have no other wish than that (the grated door of a burial-place) may open for me at no distant period." "The recollection of youth, health, and power of activity neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor strain of comfort. The best is, the long halt will arrive at length and close all." His idolized existence had a melancholy termination. The truth is, no earthly advantage can give peace to the soul or secure its bliss. (*R. Steel.*) *Political Transitions*.:—How varied and fitful are the scenes of national life, they are alternations of sins and sorrows. The reaction of human thought is both sudden in its nature and extreme in its tendency. When once its energies are stimulated, they become restless and surge from one realm to another. As the winds change in a moment from one point of the compass to its opposite extreme and toss the ship from its destined course, so this impetus of change sweeps down upon the soul with such power that it reels for a time, is then caught by the current and carried contrary to the intention of its calmer moments. Thus, as we gaze upon the picture, our wonder is excited that a people so strong in their respect for the Divine, should now conspire to dethrone its authority by establishing the human. Political transitions:—

- I. AS FOUNDED ON THE MOST FRIVOLOUS PRETEXT. It generally happens that the greatest revolutions are founded upon petty excuses. Thus our national institutions yield to the touch of fancy, the suggestion of caprice, or to the effort of misguided partisanship. This political change was founded—1. On the old age of Samuel. The conduct of these elders was cruel and ungrateful. No man living had served their secular and religious interests as Samuel had, they could ill afford his departure from their senate, and though his sun was gone down they should have tenderly respected the lingering brightness which yet tinted the evening horizon. 2. On the conduct of Samuel's sons. This plea was (1.) Unjust to Samuel. Because, although the injustice of his sons was prejudicial to national comfort and success, it was not his fault but his sorrow and misfortune. (2.) It was remedial. But no, the people are bent upon revolution, the voice of reason is drowned in the tumult of passion. 3. Consider the request of the nation. (1.) It was influential. "The elders of Israel" (ver. 4). One would have thought that these elders were old enough to have known better, that the circumstances of their life

would have inspired a sympathy towards the aged parent. But no, the oldest men are sometimes misguided, and the wisest often mistaken. Social rank is no guarantee for common sense. (2.) It was unanimous. 4. The conduct of Samuel in this crisis. We can scarcely imagine the feelings of Samuel as he listens to this desire for a king. He is alone, the companions of his youth are gone. He is sad; the nation of to-day has no sympathy with his grief, but is striving to sever the last tie which binds the old man to the scenes of his boyhood. (1.) Samuel's prayer. Samuel acted in this crisis as a true man, he did not selfishly appeal to the forbearance of the people, did not vent his grief in ungovernable rage, but calmly asked the aid of heaven. II. AS PURSUED IN ANTAGONISM TO THE DIVINE WILL. 1. The Divine permission. 2. The Divine protestation. "Howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them" (ver. 9). God never wantonly leaves human nature to itself, he uses means to prevent wrong, pushes them to a certain point, then if resisted by the force of will he retires, and permits the nation to work out a ruin, which becomes disciplinary. III. AS INVOLVING THE MOST ALARMING CONSEQUENCES. 1. The despotic character of their future ruler. Sometimes God makes disclosures of the future in order to deter from sin, he places an angel in the path to warn and rebuke our folly. He would:—(1.) Disregard life's dearest relationships (ver. 11). (2.) Impose several burdens of service (ver. 16). (3.) His arbitrary distribution of property (ver. 14). 2. The withdrawal of Divine sympathy in this extremity (ver. 18). Surely if anything could have silenced the demand of the nation such a fearful picture as this would, but the passion is so intense, the national yearning so strong, the present pushes upon their sceptical minds, the future days of life are unreal to them, hence the stern realities to come fade into mist, and the cry is uttered yet more fervent:—"But we will have a king over us." LESSONS: (1.) The awful power of restless impulses to disturb national peace. (2.) The base ingratitude of collective life. (3.) The dignity of noble manhood. (4.) The persistency of national desire. (5.) The unfettered action of human conduct. (*J. S. Ezell, M.A.*) *Asking for a king*:—I. WHY DID THE PEOPLE DESIRE A KING? Because the rule of the Judges had brought them neither quietness within nor security from enemies without. National unity had almost disappeared. They seem twelve tribes rather than one nation. They were scattered over a wide and difficult territory, traversed only by a few wretched paths. When hostile incursions fell upon exposed regions, the untroubled portions were often indifferent to the fate of their brethren. The Judges whom God raised up to deliver them had little influence beyond the scene of their exploits. The feebleness of the prophet, prematurely old with his cares, and the unworthiness of his sons, increased the popular discontent. Many years ago, their fathers had wanted to make Gideon king: now surely the time had come for a strong central government. Then let the change be made while Samuel was with them, rather than risk the chance of unpromising successors. Had not Jehovah himself looked forward to a kingdom? Both Abraham (Genesis xvii. 6-16) and Jacob (Genesis xxxv. 11) had been promised that they should be fathers of kings. Moses had anticipated the monarchy in his final address (Deuteronomy xvii. 14-20) Everything seemed to favour and demand the step. II. WHY WAS THE REQUEST WRONG? Not in the sense of its need, but in the way of seeking it. The people forgot their covenant relation to Jehovah—that they were a peculiar nation, with a peculiar history and a peculiar mission. Such a demand showed ingratitude, distrust and disloyalty toward God. They wanted to better their government instead of reforming their character, and looked to legislation for help which could come only from righteousness. III. WHY DID GOD CONSENT TO WHAT HE DID NOT APPROVE? Because, if He could not do the best for them, He would do the best He could. His disapproval was for their sins; His consent, to a change not wrong in itself, probably in His plan. The idea of royalty belonged to a true conception of the Messiah, and would be developed most successfully by the rule of righteous kings, as the cross was typified by the sacrifices. Since the people were too faithless to wait God's time, resistance to their wishes could only harden their hearts. The history of our race is one record of the accommodation of a Divine ideal to human frailty. Besides the ever-present truth that all mischief comes from sin and all happiness is found in obedience to God, the special value of the lesson is to illustrate the true source of national greatness. This law is stated in a Divine utterance at Sinai: "If ye will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto Me

above all people : for all the earth is mine." Here are three distinct statements : first, all the earth is God's ; second, a single nation is chosen by Him as a peculiar treasure ; third, the ground of the choice, the condition of the favour, is national righteousness. This compact statement declares the providential evolution and Divine selection of nations, resulting in the survival of the fittest. 1. The Divine order is not committed in favour of any one form of government. Political forms are means, not ends. We cannot assume that a democracy is the ideal. The kingdom of heaven is a monarchy, not dependent on men's votes for its authority, or human legislation for its laws and penalties. Stable governments are growths, not manufactured forms, and the same growth is not fitted for every soil. When King Murat demanded of Lord Holland to make him a constitution, the wise statesman replied, " You might as well ask me to build you a tree." A republic demands general virtue and intelligence. What would become of Russia or Turkey if made democracies at once? The Almighty has blessed forms of government widely different. An ideal constitution will not make an ideal nation. 2. The Divine order is not committed to any degree of material prosperity. Egypt had everything, Israel nothing ; yet the mob of slaves was chosen before the kingdom opulent with treasure and hoary with learning. Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, have been used and discarded in the advance of the church. 3. The Divine order is committed eternally for righteousness. This has been the principle of selection in national evolution, not the development of certain political forms. The moral good of the race is the only object which a holy God can permit to control its destinies. The Christian character of our government must be asserted and maintained. It is false to speak of this government as having no religious character. It was born a Christian nation by the will of man and also by the will of God. Surely the centuries have brought us something ; above all else, a Christian birthright. Christianity is the " Common law " of the land. All, all, proclaim that Christianity, general, tolerant Christianity, Christianity independent of sects and parties, that Christianity to which the sword and fagot are unknown, general, tolerant Christianity, is the law of the land. The virtue of its individual citizens is the nation's real hope. The sins which have destroyed the dead nations have been the sins of individuals. The state as a corporation has no soul. We know but two moral existences, God and man ; and the conduct which God rewards in individuals will secure his blessing upon their associated action. A community may be rich or poor, may be under a monarch or a president : are its members righteous?—then they will have national prosperity ; are they vile?—their nation will be cursed. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Asking for a king* :—Revolutions sometimes take place without great popular excitement or the leadership of great men. The history before us presents such a case. The *dramatis personæ* are the elders of the tribes, the representatives of the people ; Samuel the prophet, the judge and hero ; and Saul, the least free agent of them all, whose exceptional size contrasts with the littleness of the figure he cuts in this first scene of a national tragedy. The revolution, however quietly accomplished, was important and permanent. The introduction of a new instrument under the theocracy, it for ever separated the prophetic office from civil government. Henceforth the prophet and magistrate are distinct as to office and often antagonistic as to policy. Both are prominent in the development of the Messianic design. The freedom of the individual and the equality of the citizen have never been so justly and wisely provided for as under the Hebrew law. A freer people from the Exodus to the reign of Solomon was never known. The idea of royal authority was not new to the Hebrews. All around them were petty monarchies more or less absolute, and by tradition and commerce they were familiar with the greater kingdoms of the Nile and Euphrates. The demand for a king came from the elders of the tribes. They came fortified with Scripture, quoting Moses in Deut. 17. 14-20, simply asking what the Lord had predicted and recorded by their great legislator as a possible event in their history. They aimed at a centralisation of power that would combine the tribes for defensive purposes. To their unbelief, which failed to look beyond man, it seemed that Samuel was to have no successor. The history of popular revolutions shows that there was no unusual lack of political wisdom among those compatriots of Samuel. Indeed, their mistake has ever been the ordinary wisdom of the world. Grecian and Roman history shows how natural it is for nations to seek relief from popular lawlessness in tyrants, dictators and emperors. Mediæval history repeats how

popular suffering, industries and property sought escape from feudal tyrannies under the sceptre of kings. So the Hebrews falsely argued. To secure a possible constitutional concession they adopt manners and methods full of insult and ingratitude to Samuel and sacrilege and impiety toward God. The political blunder, as well as religious crime, of the Hebrews was in charging their troubles not upon corrupt magistrates and popular lawlessness, but on their national constitution. Now, it may be admitted that this constitution was defective in power just as soon as the people lost the sense of their theocratic obligations and of Jehovah as their present King. Decline in theocratic belief and life was ever the one sign of weakness in the Hebrew commonwealth, and the one only dissolvent of their otherwise impregnable security. Their liberties were invincible against internal or external foes so long as they were faithful to inspired covenant morality; but apostasy ever made them vulnerable, and at last exposed their national life to a deadly wound. In this hour of ecclesiastical and political peril Samuel carried the matter in prayer to God. To the illustrious chief the answer of God is full of grace, sympathy and pathos: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." This reply teaches—1. That this prayer for a king was essential apostasy (Ps. cxviii. 9). In coming down to the political policies of surrounding nations they violated their covenant relations and exposed themselves to bondage under the prince of this world. The final cause of all priestly and political absolutism is to be found in the implacable enmity of Satan to divine sovereignty and human liberty. "Conscience makes cowards of us all," and fears, the inevitable consequence of declining piety, make them distrust the protection and guidance of Jehovah. 2. That this prayer for a king was the outburst of an hereditary vice. This was the rejection of the sovereignty of God. They did now just what their patriarchs did to Joseph and their fathers to Moses, the representatives of that sovereignty. 3. That this prayer for a king was practical idolatry (ver. 8). 4. That God may grant the obstinate prayer of mistrust (vers. 9, 19-22). 5. Yet the prayer was granted under solemn protest and clear warning (vers. 9-18). The original government of the world designed by God was neither a monarchy, an aristocracy nor a republic. None of these is compatible with the individual sovereignty bestowed in the creation of man. But the theocracy was above the ethical culture of the people, too sublime for the moral education of their schools. The large personal liberty conferred by the Mosaic constitution degenerated into social lawlessness and weak administration, and foreign infidelity and socialism penetrated and corrupted the religious beliefs and national manners of the people. The moral status of the people was unworthy of the free government God had given them. Concentration under the direct sovereignty of God was more possible than under a human dynasty. This their own history demonstrates. God alone is King. The noblest idea of government, individual or social, is a theocracy, and under it the parity of citizens. Nor need this state be utopian if the people are, as they ought to be and can be, under a Bible cultus. National unity and perpetuity is a matter of ethics, and not of community of race, tradition and history, of laws and language, of literature and religion. These latter are additional bonds, but history, from the Hebrews to the Americans, shows how feeble they are to preserve national unity. Scepticism and infidelity are the sure signs of mental and moral degeneracy in civilisation. Royalty is a Divine prerogative, and property belongs to the Son of God. Our safety is trust in God by the recognition in the family, school and legislature of Jesus Christ as King, His doctrines as law and His precepts as practice. (*G. C. Heckman, D.D.*) *Demand for the tangible and visible*:—For are we not all in the same condemnation? The life of faith, which relies on an unseen arm, and hearkens to the law of an unseen King, is difficult, the sense cries out for something that it can realise and cling to. Luther, in one of his letters, has a parable that tells how he looked at the vault of the sky, and sought in vain for the pillars that held it up, and how he feared that, having no visible support, it must fall. We all would like to see the upholding columns. An Alpine path without a parapet seems to us more dangerous than if a wall, however low, fenced it on the side of the precipice. "Give us a king" is but the ancient form of the universal craving for something "more substantial" than the bare word of a God whom sense cannot grasp. How many of us would rather have a good balance at our banker's than God's promise, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water made sure"! How many of us call the visible supports "solid realities," and the unseen strengths

"mystical," meaning thereby unreal! How few of us believe that the Unseen is the real and solid, and the visible and transient and phantasmal! Let us scrutinise our governing ideas, and we shall find them very like those that sent the elders to Samuel, crying for a king. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 7—9. **Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee.**—*Prayer answered under protest*:—Prayer is certainly a most salutary exercise whenever one is agitated beyond his strength. When the elders of Israel came to Samuel he discovered that the complication was too deep for an old man like him to deal with; and so he went in prayer to God. In the end we shall learn that the petition of these malcontents was granted, but with the answer came retribution and ultimate dismay. Prayers are sometimes answered under protest. Let us, then, move on at once in our search. I. **WE SHALL HAVE TO BEGIN WITH A FAIR AND DETAILED EXPOSITION OF THE NARRATIVE AS IT MEETS US.** 1. This verse, besides its bearing upon our main point, contains a valuable lesson of its own: Rejecting Divine Providence is rejecting Divine government and forfeiting Divine favour. There is no sense in a declaration that we accept God's law in general, but reserve the right to practical freedom in reference to particulars. "The end of all civil government," says an ancient thinker, writing for our times as wisely as for his own, "is to live well according to the Divine pleasure." We are surely Christians, but in general, you know; not quite so particular as we might be, possibly, but with a decided respect for religion always. Now this will not do; Jesus Christ is everything to a man, or He is nothing. In all human history there has never been a fitter leader to command our loyalty or to win our love. We have been told that the ancient Persian kings used to elect, for the education and training of their princes, the four best men in the kingdom—the justest man, the wisest man, the bravest man, and the most temperate man—so that each new sovereign might have the highest advantages, and come to the regal throne best fitted to rule over the people. Christ is the Prince of a kingdom that is supreme in the universe. When the Providences of God summon us to follow Jesus as our Lord, to reject Him is also to reject the Lord that made us, and defy Him when He is most our friend. 2. You must bear in mind, also, as this narrative proceeds, that wilful disobedience, continuously repeated, becomes settled rebellion. The reply which Samuel received reminded him that this was not a new case of sudden refusal of the Divine sovereignty. That nation had actually got into the habit of it. They had never shown anything more commendable since they came up out of the land of Pharaoh; they proved an awkward and ungainly people when Moses was trying to manage them in the wilderness. When one throws off God's beneficent restraints, it is surprising to see how awfully wicked he can be as in a moment of rapid demoralisation. Things apparently innocent are made the baleful occasion, sometimes even the instrument, of violent outbreak in vice. It is one of the intense severities of Montaigne to say of these atheistic people that "they infect innocent matter with their own venom." Some sceptics like to do this in their reckless arguments. They force natural science, always loyal and reverent to the Creator of the universe, to speak a lie and bring false testimony against God. It is the deliberate counting out of Divine government which puts this universe in such a false position. The only effective manner in which to deal with such a dangerous experience is found in letting it have its own way until it shall be weary and worn with its follies and be ready to return penitently to God. 3. So now we come to the point that we started to reach. Human prayers are sometimes granted with a Divine protest. Solemn moment is that in which God gives to any man or nation in judgment what was asked of Him in petulance and pride! Now let us understand that circumstances may erect a fore-ordained fact into a responsible sin, for which those who are the actors are to be held accountable in the end. The Lord said these malcontents in Israel might have their wish, and yet he charges on them the guilt the transaction involved. Furthermore, this very demand of the people had been foreseen and publicly predicted three hundred years before. And yet this whole proceeding was now wrong; it was premature and hasty, and it was conducted without reference to the over-ruling will of Jehovah. God's Providence does not constrain any man's iniquity. Foreordination has nothing to do with free-will. Those elders were doing their own behest, not God's; and they suffered for it. II. We turn now from this story to **THE ONE PRINCIPLE IT SO VIVIDLY ILLUSTRATES.** It is

worth our while to press a valuable admonition like that which is given here. We are told to let our hearts go forth in prayer continually unto God, and God will grant us our desires. But here we learn that not even the answers we obtain are to be trusted always. What does this mean in real experience? 1. It means that all petitions are to be offered, and all desires are to be pressed, according to the Lord's will before our will. If we thrust ourselves forward, Divine Providence will frequently hedge up the way. If now we urge on, sometimes the barrier is seen to move quietly away; then we can have our request if we continue to press it. But is this safe or wise? that is the sober question. It is the creature erecting itself against the supreme judgment of its Creator and taking its case into its own hands. When a man is intelligent, and his conscience tells him that God is not exactly granting, but only permitting, his prayer, is it best for him to persevere in it in the confident hope that courage will carry him through into safety? 2. And for another thing, this declaration means that under protest God grants a Christian's prayer, the answer will be a positive discipline rather than a blessing. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.)

Ver. 10. **And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.**—*An admonition to the wilful:*—When about to frame the Tabernacle in the wilderness, Moses was specially instructed by God to make it after the pattern which had been shown him in the holy mount. When Jeremiah was set apart to the prophetic office, for which he confessed himself unfit, God said, "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee; and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jer. i. 7). The rule with respect to all preachers of the gospel is after a similar form: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. iv. 11); "It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. iv. 2). Ministerial fidelity is the full declaration of the word of God to the consciences of men. "Who is a true and faithful steward?" asked Latimer of old. "He is true, he is faithful, that coineth no new money, but seeketh it ready coined of the Goodman of the house; and neither changeth it nor clippeth it, after it is taken to him to spend, but spendeth even the selfsame that he had of his Lord; and spendeth it as his Lord commanded him." Such a man was Samuel, who "told all the words of the Lord unto the people." This fidelity is essential to the proper discharge of the ministerial office, as it was of the prophetic. The fear of man may not alter the doctrine of the pulpit. The preacher of the word must declare all the counsel of God, whether men hear or whether they forbear. Ere the people proceeded to make a change of Government, Samuel declared the manner of the king that should reign over them. Samuel did not show the people what a king ought to be—that was written in the books of the law of Moses; but what he would be. In the East, kings maintain great magnificence, live in highest luxury, and indulge their passions. Followed by sycophants baser than themselves, they soon get beyond amendment, and, secure in their self-sufficiency, are heedless of the complaints and wrongs of their subjects. Such were the men who wore a crown in the days of Samuel, nor have Eastern monarchs much changed since then. But when an object is earnestly desired, all connected with it is viewed through the coloured glasses of the beholder. The people of Israel saw only the magnificence, not the luxury; the dignity, not the expense; the power, not the oppression of a king. They were willing to run before a royal chariot,—that would be no slavery. They would enlist in an army,—that would be no yoke. They would give the best to a Hebrew king,—that would be no sacrifice. The enthusiasm of the people saw no evil in a royal crown or a courtly retinue. Like little children, the passions of a people are blind to the future. They will have their desire, though it prove their ruin. Thus French factions would have their objects in the revolutionary era, regardless of the wrong they caused, the blood they shed, the religion they blasphemed, the God they dishonoured, until the Red Republic was more cruel than ever despotic monarchy had been. Thus the sinner will have his desire, though he imperil his soul for ever. The avaricious will have gold, though it becomes his idol, and his immortal spirit worships the golden calf. The inebriate will have his drink, though he degrade his being, blast his character, beggar his family, and damn his soul. The sinner will have his sin though it ruin him for ever. But there is personal danger resulting from the indulgence of wrong motives, and from the eager pursuit of sin. The soul is debased, made guilty, and exposed to retribu-

tion. It may awaken too late to retrace its steps, to secure pardon and salvation. Present decision to be right with God is therefore an imperative duty, as it is the guarantee of future blessing. Faithful as Samuel was to the people in declaring the words of God, he is none the less so in rehearsing the words of the people of God. The decided indication of the popular will does not alter Samuel's views, or tempt him to depart from God. He can go back to the presence of God with the same uprightness as he had come from that sacred place. The tides of popular feeling did not bear him away. He could stand alone in his devotedness to God if the people should all reject the word of the Most High. He acted as the commissioner of Jehovah, and therefore laid the wish of the people before the throne of God. He was willing to abide by the Divine decision. God granted the request of the people, and Samuel gave information accordingly. This did not indicate Divine approbation of their conduct; for it showed that they were to bear the responsibility of the step. They become new opportunities of well-doing if rightly improved, or means of conviction of the sin committed. They had confidence in Samuel's prayers, and were willing to abide the issue. "The history of the world," says a judicious commentator, "cannot produce another instance in which a public determination was formed to appoint a king, and yet no one proposed either himself or any other person to be king, but referred the determination entirely to God." (*R. Steel.*)

Vers. 19-20. **And they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us.—A king desired:**—If we were asked what is the prevailing feeling which the study of this history is calculated to produce, we should answer in one word—disappointment. I. The request of the Israelites brings before us a melancholy view of the PROGRESS OF DEGENERACY IN A COMMUNITY. It requires no effort to perceive in this desire of the Israelites the renewed manifestation of the discontented and rebellious disposition which prevailed in the camp at the Red Sea, and on subsequent occasions in the wilderness; but now it was marked by a greater fixedness of criminal resolve and of God-dishonouring purpose. It was the sin of the fathers living over again, but with greater intensity, in the persons of the children. This view of the case is, in a high degree, admonitory. None of us, perhaps, think enough of the connection between ourselves and the future. Each age exerts a very considerable influence on that which succeeds it, and the men of any particular age are responsible to God in a very large and affecting measure for the characteristics of the period which may come after them. The degeneracy of communities is after all the degeneracy of individuals; and he who makes the effort to prevent in the conduct of a single individual the continuance of sin—who attempts in the case of a single individual to raise the tone of morals, does so far provide a better state of things for the age that shall come after him. If looking at the clamorous assembly which the narrative brings before us as now surrounding Samuel and asking a change in the form of government, we inquire whence learnt they those low thoughts of God which led them so much to dishonour Him as to wish to put Him aside in order to make room for an earthly ruler? the only proper and correct reply would be, "From those who went before them." We live for a future age, and virtually we have the character of that age in our hands, whether as it concerns the nation, the church, or the family. II. The scene brought before us by this demand of Israel for a king, teaches us the PERILOUSNESS OF ALLOWING OUR THOUGHTS TO RUN IN AN IMPROPER DIRECTION, AND OUR WISES TO CENTRE UPON A WRONG OBJECT. And this for a reason which is very distinctly conveyed to us in the tenour of the narrative—the absorbing effect of one wrong thought, and its consequent power to throw into oblivion all those counteracting thoughts and objects which from any other source might be suggested. Trace the progress of this one wrong desire, in Israel, of having a king. Was there nothing to be said on the other side? Rather we might ask, Is it not exceedingly easy to conceive of the counteracting effect which at the first stage might have been presented to such a wish by a recollection of their actual privileges at the moment? There is a matchless sublimity—the sublimity of condescension and graciousness—about the very idea of a theocracy. But if its sublimity did not appeal to their moral sense, its peculiar advantageousness might have appealed to their self-regard. The God-honouring wish grew stronger and stronger. At least, however, it might have been expected that they would be moved by a vivid delineation of the unwelcome consequences which God declared would attend on the new

arrangement. Yet, after all, this is but a picture of real life, applicable to every age. It contains a faithful warning. It says—"Beware of the first wrong desire, give it no encouragement. Beware of the first misdirection of thought. Be sure you are right at first in your plans and purposes, because afterwards, by reason of the very force with which wrong thoughts indulged exclude all suggestions to the contrary, it may be too late to alter." To the young it especially says—"In the purposes you cherish, the plans you propose, the changes you contemplate, the objects on which you allow your affections to rest, beware of a mistake at the first." III. It is of importance that we should carefully study THE ESSENTIAL EVIL OF THE MOTIVE WHICH HERE OPERATED IN THE MINDS OF THE HEBREW NATION. That motive was—that they might be like other people. And if in a thoughtful mood we take a survey of the causes which have wrought to produce moral desolation in communities from that day until the present, there will appear none whose operation has proved more widely mischievous, more intensely active to harm than this—a desire to be like others. Many a time has that young man left the house of God full of conviction, and ready to resolve that, whatever others did, he would serve the Lord. But he turned to take another look at the world, and the thought came along with the look, that much of his worldly interest depended upon the friendship of those around him, and that if he expected them to be his friends, his opinions and his habits must not be opposed to theirs. He gave in to the principle of being like them; and, having resembled them in time, his lot now throughout eternity resembles theirs too. Alas! the wreck of souls which this principle involves! and, we must add, the wreck of earthly comfort, too. (J. A. Miller.)

Ver. 22. **Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.**—"Vox populi, vox Dei":—Perhaps there is no proverb which is more familiar, as it is certain there is none more faulty, than this: "The voice of the people is the voice of God." And since the motto is Latin, it might as well go now with a comment upon it from one of the greatest of the old Roman philosophers, even Cicero himself, who says in his treatise Concerning Laws: "It is most absurd to suppose that all the things are just which are found in the enactments and institutions of a State. There is no such power in the sentence and command of fools as that by their vote the nature of things can be reversed. The law did not begin when first written, but when it first had existence; that is, when the Divine mind first had existence." 1. The story gives us the date to start with, and connects present histories with those of a great and honoured past. Samuel is still at the nation's head, but failing: "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel." Piety cannot be transmitted according to physical laws; and yet it seems as if we might insist upon the signal benefits of being born of good stock rather than of corrupt. 2. Who were these sons of Samuel? Unfortunately there is no account of them that gives any satisfaction. The lesson we learn here is worth pressing a little: noble names do not change bad hearts nor make wicked men fit to hold high office. Samuel probably hoped a great deal for those sons of his when he fixed upon them such names as these in the reverent regard for the old faith of Israel. "Joel" signifies Jehovah is God; and "Abiah" means Jehovah is my Father. We have no evidence that these children cared for their fine names while they were little, as Samuel did for his when he moved reverently around in the ministrations of the Tabernacle, a devout lad, obedient to God and to Eli. We surely might expect that a maiden called "Sophia" ought not to be a fool, for her name means wisdom. And just so "Gertrude" suggests a character of all-truth. And "Alfred" becomes a pledge of all-peace. And "Leonard" must not be a coward as long as he is called lion-like. "Francis" is to be frank, and "Anna" is to be gracious, or intelligent people will laugh when their names are called out in the room. Surely Nathanael, Theodore, Elnathan, and Dorothy ought to bear in mind every day and hour that their names all alike signify the gift of God. 3. The illustration of all this grows more and more vivid as the story moves on; the next verse reads: "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judgment." The lesson we learn from this is explanatory as well as full of admonition: covetousness is idolatry. A curious word is this here rendered "lucre;" it is precisely that which Moses employed when he was defining the duties and character of a judge: "Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men,

such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." That word "covetousness" is the same as the word "lucre" in this verse before us. The old Hebrew Targum translates it, "the mammon of falsehood." 4 At this point the Scripture narrative begins to indicate the effect of all this disastrous corruption in Samuel's own family. "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah." Croakers always find easy companionship: that is our lesson now. Ravens are said to detect afar off birds of the same black feather and the same lugubrious voice. These "elders of Israel" in the story might surely have been about better business than ministering to popular discontent. They were living under a theocracy, and God was overhead; they could have interfered before for the suppression of these corrupt judges, and in a wiser way. It was a remark of Lord Beaconsfield that "it is much easier to be critical than to be correct." Joel and Abiah were bad enough; we wonder if the monarchists liked the atmosphere better when Saul came into power. The plan proceeds plausibly. It is fashionable to prate about the voice of the people: vox populi, vox Dei: here the voice of the people is directly against the voice of God on a great moral and political issue. A thousand votes for a wrong is not enough to make it right: once nothing is nothing, twice nothing is nothing, ten times nothing is nothing, a thousand times nothing is nothing: how many Israelite elders would be necessary so to multiply nothing as to make it foot up something at last? Just as many, we reply, as at any time it would take of wrong-headed men to make wrong right. 5. But now let us bear in mind that when a mean thing has to get itself done somehow, it requires a vast amount of meaningless talk for its advancement into recognition and success. Our practical lesson from this part of the story is this: graceful language is sometimes used to conceal thought, and not express it. Diplomacy has a certain strong flavour of antiquity about it. Just notice how these crafty elders plead their hypocritical arguments for an overthrow of the government, and shake the conscientious scruples of the faithful old man by the humiliating and cruel arraignment of his sons. Those were not the real reasons why they wanted a king. Lord Bacon declares that "in all wise human governments they that sit at the helm do more happily bring their purposes about, and insinuate more easily into the minds of the people, by pretext and oblique courses than by direct methods; so that all sceptres and maces of authority ought in very deed to be crooked in the upper end." It was an old saying of Pascal that the world is satisfied with words, and few care to dive beneath the surface of them. Logic has very little to do with the utterances of a bad heart when politicians begin to reason; and there is truth in the sarcasm of one of the wittiest of Frenchmen: "When the major of an argument is an error, and the minor a passion, it is to be feared that the conclusion will be a crime, for this is a syllogism of self-love." Why did they not suppress the sons and cling to God. 6. We become more and more sure as we read on that majorities are not to be trusted among even the wisest of men. Majorities can be gotten on almost every occasion for the right or for the wrong indiscriminately, according to the popular epidemic of enthusiasm at the time. What is wanted in our day is the virtue of an individual courage and of a personal conviction. We need voters with a conscience that impels them to stand by the right measures and support the righteous men for administering them. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.)

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 2. **Saul, a choice young man.**—*The choice young man*:—1. The first thing to notice about young Saul is his fine physique. Do not despise a fine physique. Plato calls it "a privilege of nature"; Homer, "a glorious gift of the Deity"; and Ovid, "a favour bestowed by the gods." Has it never struck you how frequently the sacred writers allude to this quality? It would be easy to find a score of Bible characters who are spoken of as "comely," or "goodly," or of "great beauty." In comparison to the soul the body is not of great account; but still it must not be treated with neglect. The soul's lodgment should be kept

in the best and most beautiful condition. "It is a great mistake," says Oobbet, in his essays to young men, "to suppose that you derive any advantage from exterior decoration. Though with the foolish and vain part of women fine clothes frequently do something; yet the greater part of the sex are much too penetrating to draw their conclusions solely from the outside show of a man. They look deeper, and find other criterions whereby to judge." The piece is not very classical; but, as expressing the common feeling of the best part of women towards the dandy or coxcomb, I believe it is almost perfection. Physical beauty alone is a poor thing. Talleyrand said of a lovely woman that "beauty was her least charm." An intelligent mind and a kindly heart are as necessary almost to make a face truly beautiful as form and complexion. Physical beauty is often seen apart from spiritual beauty—"a gold ring in a swine's snout." 2. The second thing to notice about young Saul is his filial piety. There is no duty more plainly or strongly enforced in the Scriptures than the duty of obeying parents. And with it are associated the highest rewards and the severest punishments; and these rewards and punishments pertain not only to the future, but to the present life. The late William E. Forster, while still a youth, was ambitious of a political career. His own notion was to study for the law, as the likeliest means by which a poor man's son could enter Parliament. But his father insisted on his going into business. And the son did as his father wished without demur, although not without keen disappointment and pain. He fancied that his chances of Parliament were at an end. In this connection his biographer says: "The boy acted invariably in such a manner as to prove that the reverential regard he professed for his father was really felt, and that he was at all times ready to submit his own inclinations to meet the wishes of the latter." Did William Forster suffer ultimately by his filial submission? Most people will say that the father was wrong, and that his action was fitted to thwart the hopes of his boy. And that is true. But Forster, by his filial honour, had secured the interposition and influence of Heaven on his behalf. And so, unlikely as it looked, he got into Parliament, and made a name for himself there by noble and valuable services to his country—a name which will not soon be dropped from our nation's story. We must not omit to notice here additionally the affectionate consideration young Saul had for his father. 3. The third thing to notice about young Saul is his modest disposition. It is told of an old Scotch weaver that he was wont to pray every morning that the Lord would give him "a guid opeenion o' himsel'." I cannot conceive a less needed petition. The great fault with people nowadays is that they have too good an opinion of themselves—see themselves bigger and better a great deal than the reality. While pride makes men ridiculous, humility commands admiration and love. Sir Joshua Reynolds was never satisfied with his work. He said once to a friend, who was praising his pictures very highly: "Sketches, sketches, only sketches!" When George Washington rose to reply to an eloquent and flattering speech, expressive of the thanks of his country for his services in the French and Indian Wars, he blushed, stammered, and then sat down in utter confusion, drawing from the speaker the further compliment that his modesty was equal to his valour. Virgil, the "Prince of Latin Poets," could not bear to be stared at in the street; and would sometimes seek shelter in shops from the demonstrations of his admirers. But modesty may degenerate into a vice. Men suffer, and the world suffers, by an excess of modesty. Milton attributes to the just and pious honouring of ourselves every laudable endeavour and worthy achievement. And so Pythagoras said to his pupil: "Reverence thyself." I would rather have a man over-estimate than under-estimate his powers. While the first mistake may stimulate small talents to the performance of great deeds, the last may prevent great talents from achieving half their possibilities. We are familiar with the grumblings of (so-called) "modest merit." It complains of neglect and unfair treatment. Nincompoops and nobodies are getting on, and even loaded with rewards and honours, while it is left without notice and without pay. But well has Washington Irving said of these complaints: "They are often the cant by which indolent and irresolute men seek to lay their want of success at the door of the public. Modest merit is too apt to be inactive, or negligent, or uninstructed merit. Well-matured and well-disciplined talent is always sure of a market, provided it exerts itself; but it must not cower at home, and expect to be sought for." 4. The fourth thing to notice about young Saul is his independent and generous spirit. In search of the asses, he came near to the town where resided the prophet Samuel. The servant suggested to him that he should consult the seer about the

strayed herd. The idea was good—capital—here was a way out of his difficulty. "But," said Saul, "behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?" Saul was a gentleman! Do not say that this was an Eastern custom. It was, and the plate at the church door is a Western custom. But Saul might have neglected the custom, as some among us—I do not say in this audience—may neglect the plate. He respected the religion of his fathers. To all outward seeming he walked in the commandments of Jehovah. God complains through Samuel, at a later stage of the king's history, that he had turned back from following Him, so that at one time Samuel had evidently been controlled, at least to some extent, by the Divine Will. But there was no depth in his religion. It was a superficial growth—its roots did not go down into the heart. And so the disappointment of his later history. Giving so much promise at the start, his life closed in midnight blackness and horror. (*F. A. Forrester, M.A.*)

The choice young man:—Let us ask ourselves what are the characteristics of the choice young man. The "choice" of anything signifies the best example of that thing. The word involves the idea not of exceptionalness but of representativeness. The choice fruit of the tree is the tree's best fruit; it is that in which the tree's juices have had their most unhindered way, and made the best which that tree was capable of making. The choice work of art is the freest embodiment of the artistic spirit, the thing in which beautiful thought and beautiful work and beautiful material have done their best. The choice man is the best specimen of humanity, the human being in whom there is least that is inhuman or unhuman, and in whom the truly human qualities are most complete. So is it with the choice young man. He is the true young man. The great point of the phrase is this—that it denotes not an exception but a true condition of human life. When, however, we go on to ask, beyond this generous consciousness of admiration, what it is which we admire in young manhood, our answer must be found, I think, in the way in which the true human life always begins with its circumference, as it were, complete, and then fills in its space with its details. It might have been just the opposite. Life might have been made to begin with some one point and slowly widen out from that point until its completeness were attained. As it is, it leaps at once to this completeness of itself; it is exuberant at the beginning; it does not distrust the world and only gradually learn that the world is worthy of its trust; it trusts the world outright, and lets all stingy questionings come afterward. Life seems so good that it is satisfied with its own normal exercises and emotions, and does not seek additions in artificial stimulants. Now here is a distinct quality in human youth, belonging to a distinct truth concerning the life of man. If it is so, then we have reached our first idea about the choice young man. In him this quality of human youth will be most bright and clear. He will be most possessed with the sense of the sufficiency of life, and most eager to preserve its purity because of the completeness which he feels in it. This is the true motive of the best young man's desire for purity. It is not fear. Life, the true life, the choice life, begins upon the mountains. As the morning mists scatter, it sees the gulfs it did not see at first; but it has no natural necessity to plunge into them when they are seen. And the true power of its continence is not the horror of the gulf, but the abundance and glory of the pure hill-top where the young feet stand. All this does not apply only to those things which are absolutely and manifestly vicious, to wanton licentiousness and reckless sin; it applies to all the accidents of life. It is a bad sight for the eyes to see when a young man has come prematurely into the power of those accidents, when he cannot find life abundant without what we call the "comforts of life," even those which have no vicious element about them. What business has the young vigour of twenty to demand that the fire shall be warm and the seat cushioned and the road smooth? Let him not parade his incompetence for life by insisting that life is not worth living unless a man is rich—unless, that is, the abundance of life should be eked out with wealth, which is an accident of life, not of its essence. Sad is it when a community grows more and more to abound in young men who worship wealth and think they cannot live without luxury and physical comfort. The choicest of its strength is gone. The same principle, that life in the young man should be abundant in itself, would find still broader application in every relation of human action. It would bring simplicity and healthiness in every standard. It would rule out and cast aside as impertinent and offensive all that was artificial and untrue. How clear it makes the whole question of the way in which money is to

be gained or given! And so it brings us at once to another practical question of young men's life. Money to the simple healthy human sense is but the representative of energy and power. It is to pass from man to man only as the symbol of some exertion, some worthy outputting of strength and life. In social life, in club, in college, on the street, the willingness of young men to give or to receive money on the mere turn of chance is a token of the decay of manliness and self-respect which is more alarming than almost anything besides. It has an inherent baseness about it which not to feel shows a base soul. To carry in your pocket money which has become yours by no use of your manly powers, which has ceased to be another man's by no willing acceptance on his part of its equivalent—that is a degrading thing. Will it not burn the purse in which you hold it? Will it not blight the luxury for which you spend it? So I rank high among the signs of a choice human youth the clearness of sight and the healthiness of soul which make a man refuse to have anything to do with the transference of property by chance, which make him hate and despise betting and gambling under their most approved and fashionable and accepted forms. Plentiful as those vices are among us, they still in some degree have the grace to recognise their own disgracefulness by the way in which they conceal themselves. It is an awful hour when the first necessity of hiding anything comes. The whole life is different thenceforth. When there are questions to be feared and eyes to be avoided and subjects which must not be touched, then the bloom of life is gone. Put off that day as long as possible. It is no drawback from the truth or power of all this that it involves the appeal to sentiment, for the presence and the power of healthy sentiment is another token of the choice young humanity. Sentiment is the finest essence of the human life. It is, like all the finest things, the easiest to spoil. It bears testimony of itself that it is finer than judgment, because a thousand times when judgment is all clear and right, sentiment is tainted and all wrong. And hosts of men, feeling the mysterious dangers which beset sentiment, would fain banish it altogether. They do not know how to use it, and so they will not try. It is explosive and dangerous, and so it shall be watched and made contraband, like dynamite. How many men do you know who can frankly look you in the face and say a piece of sentiment, and make it seem perfectly real and true, and not make either you or themselves, or both, feel silly and embarrassed by their saying it? Now if men must come to that, the longer it can be before they come to it the better! Let the sentiments have their true, unquestioned power in the young man's life. Let him glow with admiration, let him burn with indignation, let him believe with intensity, let him trust unquestioningly, let him sympathise with all his soul. The hard young man is the most terrible of all. Do you remember the simpler, nobler story of the young Christ? "When He came near He beheld the city, and wept over it." Tell me what becomes of the hard young man, proud of his unsensitiveness, even pretending to be more unsensitive than he is, incapable of enthusiasm, incapable of tears; what becomes of him beside the knightliness of a sorrow such as that? The little child is sensitive without a thought of effort. The old man often feels the joy and pain of men as if the long years had made it his own. But in between, the young man is hardened by self-absorption. Be sure that there is no true escape from softness in making yourself hard. It is like freezing your arm to keep it from decay. Only by filling it with blood and giving it the true flexibility of health, so only is it to be preserved from the corruption which you fear. Be not afraid of sentiment, but only of untruth. Trust your sentiments, and so be a man. It would be strange indeed if our first truth did not apply to the whole methods of thought as well as to the actions and the feelings. That truth was, you remember, that youth began with the large circumference, and then filled in the circle gradually with the details of living. It does not start with the small detail, and only gradually build out to the large idea. Now, what will that truth mean as we apply it to the intellectual life? Will it not mean that the choicer a young mind is the more immediately it will begin with the perception of great truths, which then its thought and study and experience will fill out and confirm? It is the place and privilege of the young man to know immediately that God is good, that the world is hopeful, that spirit is real. These great ideas are his ideas. He does not prove God's existence, building it up out of his own sight of the things God does. He sees God. He, the pure in heart, sees God; and then all his life is occupied in gathering into the substance of the faith which he has won by direct vision, the vividness and definiteness which separate successive experiences of God have to give. Not that your young man

will not make a thousand blunders, not that he will not sometimes seem to lose his sight of truth, but that the method of his mental life is right, and so that in the end he must stand clear under a cloudless sky. The world's strength has been built up thus, by young men believing and uttering the truth they saw—the greatest, largest truth—and then their experience filling that truth with solidity until it became a foundation on which yet greater truth might rest. Begin with largeness of thought, and with positiveness of thought. The way in which a man begins to think influences all his thinking to the end of his life. Begin by seeking for what is true, not for what is false, in the thought and belief which you find about you. Scepticism is not merely the disbelief of some propositions. If it were that, there is not one of us but would be a sceptic. It is the habit and the preference of disbelieving. God save us all from that scepticism! God save especially our young men from it, for a sceptical young man is a monstrosity. What shall we say about this whole last matter, the matter of belief, except that the true young man's life, the choice young man's life, is bound to be a life of vision. To see the large things in their largeness—that is his privilege; and there is no privilege which is not a duty too. And now I do not know whether there has come at all out of what I have said anything like a clear image of the choice young man. As I said when I began, I should care little to try to create that image if it were some strange, exceptional creature that I was trying to carve. But it is not that; it is the true young human being, the type and flower of the first vigour of humanity. And these are the qualities which we have seen in him—purity of body, mind, and soul; simple integrity, and a dignity which will not have what is not his, no matter under what specious form of game or wager it has come into his hands; tenderness, sympathy, sentiment—call it what name you will, a soul that is not cynical or cruel; and positive, broad thought and conviction. Do these things, as I name them, blend with one another? Does there stand out as their result a figure recognisable and clear, well-knit and strong, brave, generous, and true, but very little conscious of itself, claiming the love and honour of the human heart. For men do love the type and flower of their own young manhood. Little children and young boys look up to it with touching reverence. Old men look back to it with wistful longing, often with a perplexed wonder how they ever passed themselves through a land which they see now to be so rich and kept so little of its richness. Only once in this sermon have I spoken of Jesus as the specimen of human youth. But He is such a specimen always. And I appeal to all of you who have sympathetically read the Gospels to say whether you do not feel through all His life of sorrow the subtle, certain presence of this joy of which I speak. It is the ideal joy of life, burning through all the hardest and cruellest circumstances of life, and asserting, in spite of everything, the true condition of the Son of God and the Son of Man. I have spoken of the young man's character and life, and I have seemed to say nothing at all of his religion. Is it because I have forgotten his religion or thought it of small consequence? God forbid! It is because one of the most effectual and convincing ways to reach religion is to make life seem so noble and exacting that it shall itself seem to demand religion with the great cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" When not yet driven by the stress of sin and sorrow, but exalted by the revelation of what life might be, and eager with the witness of the truth of that revelation which fills his own self-consciousness, the young man looks abroad for help that he may realise it, then he finds Christ. And he finds Christ in the way that belongs to him just then and there, just in the time and place where he is standing. He finds Christ the model and the master. It is the personal Christ that makes the young man's religion. "Behold this Christ standing before me, pointing to the heights of the completed human life, and saying not, 'Go there,' but saying, 'Follow me'—going before us into the land our souls desire!" When religion comes to mean simply following Christ, when the young man gives himself to Christ as his Leader and his Lord, when he prays to Christ with the entire sense that he is laying hold of the perfect strength for the perfect work—then the whole circle is complete. Power and purpose, purpose and power, both are there; and only the eternal growth is needed for the infinite result. (*Phillip Brooks.*) *A choice young man*:—A great writer has said that it is possible for us to be good for nothing in history save as a warning. Saul stands in history as a warning. I. OBSERVE, THAT PRAYER SHOULD BE SUBMISSIVE. I cannot think the Israelites were wrong in their wish for a king. There is a provision in the Book of Deuteronomy for a king. But mark, they were wrong in demanding a king.

1. So sometimes God listens to and allows the blinded prayers of our hearts, and they turn to curses. "Thine own wickedness shall reprove thee and thy backslidings," &c.; "I gave thee a king in my anger," &c. 2. God sometimes grants in the way of reproof. I have seen parents who prayed: "O, spare my sick child," mourn that their boy ever lived to grow to manhood. The shadow of death receded in answer to that dictating prayer, but a darker shadow took its place. I have heard young men pray: "O Lord, give me success in this life." I have heard them declare: "That success they would have." In pain, beyond expression poignant, they afterward found out that character, made strong and shining with virtues, is better than applause, than power, than riches. 3. Let us rather pray as did our great exemplar in Gethsemane. Let us never forget that our blessing is wrapped up in God's will, and not in our own. II. LET US LEARN THAT DIVINE PROVIDENCES DESCEND TO AND INCLUDE WHAT WE CALL THEIR TRIVIALITIES OF LIFE. Could there be anything more trivial than searching for runaway asses. Yet, on this trivial circumstance swung the door through which Saul passed to his throne. Long before Mohammed's power was settled, when pursued by his enemies, at one time, he pushed back a bough that was before a cave and entered the opening. A moment after a bird lit on the bough. As the enemy came up the bird flew away. Said the enemy: "He could not have gone into that cave, or the bird would not have been on that bough," and they passed on, and Mohammed's life was saved. Tell your troubles in God's ear. Don't think them too trivial. III. LEARN THAT THERE MAY BE A FAIR BEGINNING AND A DARK ENDING. Saul attributed his first great victory to God, and would not allow the needless shedding of blood. But the drawback was. Saul had not given himself to God. There was another Saul who, when smitten down by the blinding light, cried out: "What wilt Thou have me to do?" His life was henceforth a seeming failure. He loses all things, but Saul, the king, has all things—he has his crown. Saul of Tarsus, stripped of all earthly things, awaits his crown. "Henceforth," says he, "there is laid up for me a crown," &c. Saul, the king, lost his crown in death, &c. See the difference. The one gave himself to God, the other did not. Which choice is to be preferred? Which do you make? (*Wayland Hoyt.*) *The ruin of a choice young man*:—A life of bright promise may prove a life of disastrous failure. I. THE BRIGHT PROSPECTS OF THIS CHOICE YOUNG MAN. 1. His natural endowments were such as admirably to fit him for the position it was the will of God he was to occupy, so that he entered upon his office with advantages from which the best auguries might have been formed. "See ye him," said Samuel, "whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him?" I would here remark the advantages to us, as young men, of good health, and a strong, vigorous body. 2. Nor was Saul lacking in moral qualities. His occupation, his concern for his father, his obedience to the prophet, his respect for religious ordinances, clearly indicate him to have been a man of quiet, plodding, and God-fearing disposition. Yes, you may have all these, and be in the eyes of all "a choice young man, and goodly;" yet lacking one thing, as Saul did, when trial and temptation come, the fair promise of your youth may be blighted; and when you, and others interested in you, expected to be reaping a harvest of bliss, there will be nothing left but bitter disappointment and vain regret. II. ABUSED PRIVILEGES. What God expected from the king of His people is clearly defined in Deut. xvii. 14-20. Saul was no doubt made acquainted with these injunctions by Samuel, so that there was no excuse whatever for his failure. Indeed, it is clear that his failure came not as the result of ignorance, but of a stubborn, rebellious will, which set itself in opposition to the will of God; and also from want of obedient faith. The first indication of these signs of defection, we have in I. Samuel, ch. xiii. This injunction was to be a test of Saul's faith, and it failed. Another test was given him. "Go," said Samuel, "and smite Amalek." In this test of obedience he again failed; for, contrary to his commission, he spares Agag, and also brings of the spoil of war to offer in sacrifice to God. In this his pride is manifest—he cares little for the approbation of God, but wants honour before the people. God requires of you heart-allegiance. The only true safeguard you can have for this life is in giving yourselves up to Christ. Without this you may, and some of you will, become moral wrecks like Saul. III. BLIGHTED PURPOSES. 1. The Divine purposes cannot be frustrated by our unfaithfulness. Without any interference with their moral liberty, God, no doubt, fulfils His own designs even by wicked men. The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. God makes all events and all lives subservient to His wise and holy will. Yet this is

no excuse for our lack of fidelity to duty. 2. Saul's own purposes were broken off. His heart must have been big with hope when he received the Divine anointing, and in pursuing his course of disobedience, he, no doubt, thought to win renown for himself and Israel. Self-aggrandisement was the secret purpose in much of his disobedience; and then as to his son Jonathan, whom he made a general in his army; as a father, he must have cherished purposes concerning him. But all were doomed to disappointment, and that by his own folly. He who serves God takes the best way to serve himself. It is a solemn truth, too, that when a man has begun to go wrong, he finds it harder every step he takes to retrace his course. Another startling truth, which it may be wise to mention, is given us in the ruined prospects of this virtually disrowned monarch. 3. He sins beyond the possibility of repentance. Awful capabilities of self-torture lie folded within every human soul. Youthful sins lay a foundation for aged sorrows. Heart-allegiance to Christ will be the only insurance you can have against becoming the victims of clans of evil forces now lying in ambush within the mysterious recesses of your soul. But in addition to the blighted purpose of Saul, there were others who suffered by his sin. No man liveth unto himself. What a blight did Saul's sin bring upon the hopes of Samuel. Saul, too, blasted the purposes of his family. His sin involved his sons in his misfortune; for the sceptre passed away from his house, and his family became extinct. (*W. Williams.*) *Saul: A shipwreck*:—Dr. Newman, after attempting three times to preach on Saul, is compelled to confess that Saul's character continues to be obscure to him, and he warns us that we must be cautious while considering Saul's obscure character. But, unhappily, the obscurity begins further back than Saul. The obscurity begins with Saul's father and mother. We never hear of Saul's mother; but what kind of a father can Kish have been. We know all about Samuel. All Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord; all Israel but Kish and his son Saul. Yes, there is some quite inexplicable obscurity about Kish as well as about Saul; an obscurity that perplexes us and throws us out at the very opening of the son's sad history. And yet, when we turn back and begin to read Saul's whole history over again with our eye on the object; when we stop and look round about us as we read, the ancient obscurity begins to pass off, but only to let alarm and apprehension for ourselves and for our own sons take its place. Saul staggers us and throws us out till we look at ourselves and at the men round about us, and then we soon see, what had before been obscure to us, that our inborn and indulged tastes, likings, dispositions, inclinations, and pursuits rule us also, shape us, occupy us, and decide for us the men we know and the life we lead. Josephus says that Samuel had an inborn love of justice. But Saul had inherited from Kish an inborn and an absorbing love of cattle and sheep; and, till they were lost, Saul had no errand to Samuel's city. Why hold up our hands at Saul's obscurity, and at Saul's ignorance of Samuel. We have it in ourselves. We also see what we bring eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to love. If you have no more sense of religion and life than Saul and his father had, at least, like them, give the preference to a religious servant. Saul's servant knew Samuel. Saul was led up to the door of his earthly kingdom by the piety of his father's servant; and you may be led up some day to the door of the heavenly kingdom by one of your servants who has interests and acquaintances and experiences that up to to-night you know nothing about. Saul with another heart! Saul with the Spirit of God upon him! You cannot understand. Another heart has more meanings than one in Holy Scripture; and so has the Spirit of God; and so has prophecy. Isaiah prophesied of the atoning death of Christ, but so did Caiaphas. The Spirit of God came upon Jesus at the Jordan, but He came also on Samson at the camp of Dan, and upon Balaam beside the altar of Baal. Matthew Henry in two or three words makes clear to us all the obscurity of Saul's other heart. "Saul," says the most sensible of commentators, "has no longer the heart of a husbandman, concerned only with corn and cattle; he has now the heart of a statesman, a general, a prince. When God calls to service He will make fit for it. If He advances to another station, He will give another heart; and will preserve that heart to those who sincerely desire to serve Him." So He will. But that is just what Saul, another heart, and all, did not sincerely desire to do. And here hangs the true key to the whole of Saul's sad history. He was elected and crowned king over Israel, but he was as ignorant all the time of the God of Israel as he was of Samuel, the great prophet of the God of Israel. The truth is, another heart, prophetic spirit, and all, Saul all along was little better than a

heathen at heart. And hence it is that what has often been called the profanity of Saul's character scarcely rises to the dignity of profanity. Saul's most presumptuous sins scarcely attain to profaneness. You must have some sense of what is sacred before you can be really profane. But Saul has no such sense. In his youth he had not one spark of insight or interest in the religious life and worship of Israel. He had never heard of Samuel. At the same time, in giving Saul another heart, the God of Israel gave Saul the greatest opportunity of his life to make himself a new heart. God suddenly made a break in the ungodly and heathenish life of the son of Kish. So much so that Saul for the moment was almost persuaded to become an Israelite indeed. No; there is no such obscurity about Saul getting another heart and yet that heart coming to nothing. We have all had the same thing in ourselves. We ourselves have gone out on an errand of duty or of pleasure and have come back with another heart. Sometimes it has been at a time of sorrow, and sometimes at a time of joy and gladness. At the death of a father or a mother, at the time of leaving home to take our place in a lonely world; or, again, at that happy time when our loneliness was so graciously dealt with by God. God, I feel sure, lets no man become a married man without giving him the great opportunity and the new start in religion He gave to Saul when He made him king of Israel. In the kingly heart that God gives to every bridegroom we are not far for the time from the kingdom of heaven. Had Saul's change of heart only held, had his conversion only become complete, Saul would have been one of the greatest of all the Old Testament men. Saul was not a common man. It would take a Shakespeare to put himself into Saul's place and let us see the obscure working of Saul's heart under all his temptations. But, unhappily, Shakespeare had so little interest in Divine things, at least as they are set forth in the word of God, that he has gone away and left us to deal with such characters as Esau, and Balaam, and Saul, and Judas for ourselves. Only, there is one dark passage toward the end of Saul's insane life that we need no Shakespeare nor Newman to open up to us, Saul's mad and murderous envy of David is as clear as day to every man who puts its proper name on what goes on every day in his own evil heart. Themistocles could not sleep for the victories of Miltiades, and no more could Manning sleep for the Sermons, and *The Apologia*, and the promotion of Newman. And I have my Miltiades and my Newman, and so have you. Between Saul and Themistocles and Manning, and you and me, there is no difference. In genius and in services there is an immeasurable difference; but there is no difference at all in our gnawing and sleepless envy of those who have the genius, and do the service, and enjoy the praises and the place. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) *Men of great stature*:—Mr. Lincoln, as he shook hands with the judge [Kelley, of Pennsylvania], inquired, "What is your height?" "Six feet three. What is yours, Mr. Lincoln?" "Six feet four." "Then," said the judge, "Pennsylvania bows to Illinois. My dear man, for years my heart has been aching for a President that I could look up to, and I've found him at last in the land where we thought there were none but little giants." [The distinguished Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, was known as the "little giant."] (*Raymond's Lincoln.*)

Ver. 3. **Go seek the asses.**—*The lost asses*:—Though God gave the Israelites their own way, when they would not be convinced of their error, it was not till the very last—not until He had allowed them a further opportunity of reviewing their course. Sometimes arguments which have failed to convince amidst the excitement and warmth of a public assembly, will recur with power and impressiveness in the quietude and retirement of home. We have felt, many a time, that we could not give our friends a better piece of advice than to think again before they acted; and we ourselves, probably, are no strangers to the advantages of acting upon "second thoughts," rather than upon first impressions. The Israelites accordingly were dismissed to their homes: "Go ye every man unto his city." If conscience were awake and faithful, it would hear God saying, "Sinner, I stand between thee and thy ruin a few days longer; I give thee the mercy of a few hours' delay. Go home; go and consider. Go to thy Bible; go to thy closet; go to the mercy-seat; go, ere it be too late; and pause ere thou dost resolve on persistence in thy unholy desire—in thy ungodly plan." We may be disposed to think that a more dignified form of introducing Saul might have been selected—which greater dignity would have been attained by an entire omission of the mention of such trifles as Saul's father losing his asses, and sending his son to seek them. I. The study of this feature of Saul's history demands that a thought or

two should be expended upon the subject of the introduction into Scripture of these TRIVIAL INCIDENTS, these homely occurrences—for the recollection of every reader of the Bible will immediately suggest that this is not the only instance in which the same feature meets us in its manifold narratives. A writer who, merely to answer some private end, makes up a tale, purposely avoids minute incidents. He deals in generalities; because he feels that if he should descend into particulars he will but multiply the chances of detection. The minutely circumstantial character, therefore, of many of the narratives in the Bible is so far most favourable to our reception of the Scriptures as written under Divine influence, that it guarantees their truthfulness—a characteristic, the absence of which would at once constrain us to deny their inspiration. Still further—it must be acknowledged that matters which, in themselves and separately considered, appear trivial, turn out often, in their connexion and consequences, to be most momentous. It is the habit with God to associate the most important results with that which, in its origin, appears most insignificant. Nor only so—the purpose of a Divine revelation could only be answered consistently with the dictates of the highest wisdom, as the leading features of such a revelation were conformed to the facts and features of our own every-day history. In order to accomplish its professed purpose of being a guide and directory to man, it must be a faithful picture of human life. Were the aspects under which it presented human life materially different from those under which we ourselves view it, and even participate in it, we should be tempted to say, This is not the book for us. II. The incidents connected with Saul's appointment as king were not only trivial, but they possessed in combination with this characteristic another feature—they were of a class to which, in the ordinary way of speaking, we should give the name of ACCIDENTAL. And in this respect, the history appears framed so as to teach us the simple but emphatic lesson, that there is a God of Providence, and that where, to the human eye, there may appear nothing but an accidental connexion between two or more circumstances, there exists, in the mind of God, the most clearly-intentioned, complete, and beautiful arrangement and harmony. As we look back upon our own lives there stays by us the recollection of many incidents which once appeared not only trivial, but accidental. Their occurrence was the result of no premeditation of ours. They were such as arose seemingly in the ordinary course of events; such as suggested no idea of any special purpose being involved, or such as no human foresight could have prevented. But why do they stay by us thus? What is the power which has lodged firmly in our memory things which in themselves seemed to have no claim to so long-enduring a recollection? Why have we not forgotten them long ago? For this good reason: that these very incidents constituted, as we can now see, the springs out of which flowed the most important events in the whole of our history. Such views as those which have now passed before us of a thread of Divine arrangement and plan passing through all the varied incidents of our every-day life, should incite to the habitual acknowledgment of God in all our ways. Repeated lessons discover to us our own incompetency to direct our steps rightly amid the puzzling and perplexing paths of life. For notwithstanding that which meets our eye, it is still a fact that all is arranged. The chart of the Divine purposes is gradually unfolding; but the measure and the manner of that unfolding we must leave in the hands of the great Contriver. III. Another thought suggested by that portion of the narrative now under consideration is this—that since, from God's concealment of the future, we cannot tell what He may intend to do with us and by us, IT IS OUR DUTY TO HOLD OURSELVES IN READINESS TO UNDERTAKE ANY SERVICE WHICH HE MAY REQUIRE US TO RENDER, to enter upon any position He may call upon us to fill. Of all the possible or probable events which might have happened to Saul, that of becoming king would most certainly have been set down by himself and by others as the least likely ever to occur. But how, it may be asked, can we be prepared for that which is as yet entirely concealed from us—that which we cannot even anticipate? To this it may be replied, that there are certain qualifications which are requisite alike for all positions, and which render us, in a good measure, ready for any service. Such, for instance, are diligence and fidelity in meeting the claims of our present condition, whatever it may be. Such is the effort at mental cultivation, by the acquisition of useful knowledge, and by the employment of our thoughts upon the information thus gained. To these we may add that habit of working from principle which will ever be found the best aid to perseverance, because it stands opposed to all fitful excitement. The more self-acquaintance, too, which has been gained—the more dependence upon God—the

more prayerfulness, watchfulness, and concern for God's glory—the more real religion, in fact, which a man possesses, the more satisfied will he be in any position, however lowly—the more prepared for service, however exalted. God can turn all your acquisitions to profit. Saul, in the pursuit of a lesser good, met with the offer and promise of a crown. We say he was fortunate. But there is a better fortune which meets us wandering through this desert land, and often in pursuit of objects of inferior worth. An offer of a crown is made us, but it is one of imperishable material. An offer of a kingdom is made us, but it is of "a kingdom which cannot be moved." (*J. A. Miller.*) *The lost asses*:—Who would have thought that upon the straying of asses was linked the anointing of the first king of Israel! But you must recollect there can be nothing like what we call chance in God's kingdom of Providence. Had some very wise and skilful mechanic made a beautiful piece of machinery, and, in explaining to you the different parts, were he to say of only one little wheel, "I have left that to work as it happens—I can't say what that will do;" tell me, would not your opinion of his wisdom instantly sink very much? and would not there be a secret misgiving that that one wheel, however small, might bring disorder into the whole piece of machinery? Never, then, think that He, whose work is perfect, can have left the least thing without design; nay, so wondrous is His work that often greatest events hang upon, what we should think, very small things. It is a blessed thing when the servant of God is enquired for, and it is found that he is about his Master's business. Beautiful is the account here given of Samuel (ver. 12, 13.) And here you find, while Saul was diligently seeking Samuel, Samuel stood before him. It is a great mercy to be kept in the use of means. When we have obtained mercy to seek any good thing of the Lord, we may be very sure He is waiting to give the mercy he has taught us to seek. Samuel could tell Saul that the asses were found; but he would fain draw his thoughts from such concerns to the higher matters of a kingdom. In that beautiful book, "Pilgrim's Progress," you have read about the poor man who was so busy raking among the rubbish that he never lifted up his eyes to the beautiful crown which was just over his head. What a picture of poor sinners! so taken up with seeking the things of earth that they have no eyes, no heart for heavenly things: a throne, a crown, a kingdom, go for nothing. Oh! leave caring for asses, your toys, your empty pleasures and pursuits: come to Him Who shall tell thee all that is in thy heart; yea, Who is able and willing to fill that large craving void, which all creation could not fill, but which Jesus can fill to overflowing. (*Helen Plumptre.*) *A trivial incident the herald of a momentous future*:—In the second verse we find the first mention of a great man. Some names are not worthy to receive the honour of historical immortality. Seeing that they represent injury and injustice, it is better that they should fade into unknown oblivion than stand as the patrons of evil and stimulus to crime for succeeding generations. 1. Saul is introduced in connection with his ancestry. We are informed of his nationality and parentage. If we thought more of our homes and ancestors, national life would be swept of the political and filled with the domestic. How apt are young men in times of advancement to forget their "poor relations." But it sometimes happens that God fastens a young man to his father's home by recording him in connection with his ancestry. 2. Saul is introduced in connection with the meaner duties of life. See the simplicity and mystery of the divine plan! 3. The light which this incident throws upon Saul's domestic character: (1.) Saul was an obedient son. (2.) Saul was a persevering and patient son. Yet he continued the search along the plain, mile after mile, uselessly. (3.) Saul was a considerate son. (ver. 5.) Thus he feared lest their absence should be of more grief to his parent than the loss of the animals. If every young man had such tender regard for the feelings of his father, how many homes would be cheered and how many hearts solaced! (4.) Saul was somewhat indebted to the social condition of the times for his elevation. The nation was in a state of unrest, the people were impatient; their request for a king had been communicated to Samuel, and they were anxiously awaiting the result. Yet, while the political state of the nation exercised a power in drawing Saul to kingship, it was only in a subsidiary sense. People, and especially jealous folk, are never tired of attributing the greatness and position of certain individuals to the "call of the times." True, the times do influence men, as if no king had been wanted Saul could not have been made one. The vacancy was occasioned by the unhappy combination of the times, but Saul was not so made to fill it. "The times call forth! Alas, we have known times call loudly enough for their great man, but not find him when they called!"

He was not there; Providence had not sent him; the time, calling its loudest, had to go down to confusion and wreck because he would not come when called." "But I liken common languid times with their embarrassed circumstances, impotently crumbling down into ever worse distress towards final ruin:—all this I liken to dry, dead fuel, waiting for the lightning out of heaven that shall kindle it. The great man, with his free force direct out of God's own hand, is the lightning. All blazes round him now, when he has once struck on it, into fire like his own. The dry, mouldering sticks are thought to have called him forth. They did want him greatly; but, as to calling him forth—! These are critics of smaller vision, I think, who cry, 'See, is it not the sticks that made the fire?' " * (Thomas Carlyle). See in this narrative:—I. **THE MYSTERIOUS POWERS WHICH GUIDE OUR LIVES.** These forces are two-fold: the minor or secondary influences which touch us. 1. Events. Life is so mysterious to us because we only see one side of it. Like those beautiful laurel designs which decorate the church—behind there are ugly ends of stick, there is no design, but deepest confusion: but in front there are words of hope composed of leaves and flowers. So here we only see the behind of life; in heaven we shall behold its twofold aspect, and be thrilled by its harmony rather than awed by its mystery. The mysterious event which had such an influence in shaping the future of Saul was (1) trivial. It was simply the loss of some asses. So we little know how potently the small events of every-day life touch our souls. (2.) Casual. It was quite a casual thing for Samuel to go in search of lost property. God takes hold of all the casualties of life, and makes them work the purposes of His will. (3.) At critical junctures. How the Divine Being links the separate events of life. He joined the loss of asses to Israel's desire for a king, and made the one subservient to the other. Not only are events among the minor forces which shape our lives, but also:—2. Persons. "And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God" (ver. 6.) This shows that we are influenced (1) by persons of inferior rank. We little know the shaping power which even servants exercise upon us. (2.) Unconsciously. The servant little knew that in leading Saul to Samuel he was conducting him to kingship. 2. The primary or Supreme influences which shape our lives. God is the Supreme power of life. (1) Their influence upon prophetic life. God told Samuel the person who was to be king (ver. 15) the time he would appear (ver. 15) the purpose he had in view (ver. 16) (2.) Their influence upon unfolding life. A marvellous coincidence (ver. 18, 19); a mysterious assurance (ver. 20); a consoling statement (ver. 20). II. **THE IMPORTANT ISSUES TO WHICH THEY TEND.** 1. Spiritual in their nature. They lead to the prophet. 2. Social in their bearing. Lead to kingships. (1) Predilection (ver. 19); (2) Modest credulity (ver. 21); (2) A typical preferment (ver. 22). 3. Samuel's communications to Saul. (1) Many unrecorded; (2) Privately received (ver. 27). Lessons:—1. If God wants a king he knows where to get him. 2. That obedient sons are likely to be Divinely honoured. 3. The mysterious power of human association. 4. The Divine casuistry of everyday life. 5. The harmonious working of Divine Providence. 6. The relationship of human governments to the Divine. (J. S. Ezell, M.A.)

Vers. 6-10. And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God.—*Saul brought to Samuel:*—God's Providence is a wonderful scheme; a web of many threads, woven with marvellous skill. The meeting of two convicts in an Egyptian prison is a vital link in the chain of events that makes Joseph governor of Egypt; a young lady coming to bathe in the river preserves the life of Moses, and secures the escape of the Israelites; the thoughtful regard of a father for the comfort of his sons in the army brings David into contact with Goliath, and prepares the way for his elevation to the throne; the beauty of a Hebrew girl fascinating a Persian king saves the whole Hebrew race from massacre and extermination. So in the passage now before us. The straying of some asses from the pastures of a Hebrew farmer brings together the two men, of whom the one was the old ruler, and the other was to be the new ruler of Israel. But of all the actors in the drama, not one ever feels that his freedom is in any way interfered with. All of them are at perfect liberty to follow the course that commands itself to their own minds. Thus wonderfully do the two things go together—Divine ordination and human freedom. How it should be so, it baffles us to explain. But that it is so, must be obvious to every thoughtful mind. It seemed desirable that in the first king of Israel, two classes of qualities should be united, in some degree contradictory to one another. First, he must possess some of the qualities

for which the people desire to have a king; while at the same time, from God's point of view, it is desirable that under him the people should have some taste of the evils which Samuel had said would follow from their choice. It was his servant that knew about Samuel, and that told Saul of his being in the city, in the land of Zuph (ver. 6). This cannot but strike us as very strange. We should have thought that the name of Samuel would have been as familiar to all the people of Israel as that of Queen Victoria to the people of Great Britain. But Saul does not appear to have heard it, as in any way remarkable. Does not this indicate a family living entirely outside of all religious connections, entirely immersed in secular things, caring nothing about godly people, and hardly ever even pronouncing their name? It is singular how utterly ignorant worldly men are of what passes in religious circles, if they happen to have no near relative or familiar acquaintance in the religious world to carry the news to them from time to time. And as Saul thus lived outside of all religious circles, so he seems to have been entirely wanting in that great quality which was needed for a king of Israel—loyalty to the Heavenly King. Here it was that the difference between him and Samuel was so great. Loyalty to God and to God's nation was the very foundation of Samuel's life. Anything like self-seeking was unknown to him. It was this that gave such solidity to Samuel's character, and made him so invaluable to his people. In every sphere of life it is a precious quality. But in these high qualities Saul seems to have been altogether wanting. It was not the superficial qualities of Saul that would be a blessing to the nation. It was not a man out of all spiritual sympathy with the living God that would raise the standing of Israel among the kingdoms around, and bring them the submission and respect of foreign kings. The intense and consistent godliness of Samuel was probably the quality that was not popular among the people. In the worldliness of his spirit, Saul was probably more to their liking. Yet it was this unworlily but godly Samuel that had delivered them from the bitter yoke of the Philistines, and it was this handsome but unspiritual Saul that was to bring them again into bondage to their ancient foes. This was the sad lesson to be learned from the reign of Saul. But let us now come to the circumstances that led to the meeting of Saul and Samuel. The asses of Kish had strayed. From this part of the narrative we may derive two great lessons, the one with reference to God, and the other with reference to man.

1. As it regards God, we cannot but see how silently, secretly, often slowly, yet surely, He accomplishes His purposes. There are certain rivers in nature that flow so gently, that when looking at the water only, the eye of the spectator is unable to discern any movement at all. Often the ways of God resemble such rivers. Looking at what is going on in common life, it is so ordinary, so absolutely quiet, that you can see no trace whatever of any Divine plan. And yet, all the while, the most insignificant of them is contributing towards the accomplishment of the mighty plans of God. Men may be instruments in God's hands without knowing it. When Cyrus was moving his armies towards Babylon he little knew that he was accomplishing the Divine purpose for the humbling of the oppressor and the deliverance of His oppressed people. And in all the events of common life, men seem to be so completely their own masters, there seems such a want of any influence from without, that God is liable to slip entirely out of sight. And yet, as we see from the chapter before us, God is really at work.

2. But again, there is a useful lesson in this chapter for directing the conduct of men. You see in what direction the mind of Saul's servant moved for guidance in the day of difficulty. It was toward the servant of God. And you see likewise how, when Saul and he had determined to consult the man of God, they were providentially guided to him. To us, the way is open to God Himself, without the intervention of any prophet. Let us in every time of trouble seek access to God. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Saul among the prophets*:—The threads of our daily life often appear to be either loose and unrelated or hopelessly entangled. At times we seem to have nothing to do with each other. We go on our separate ways. It is only now and then that we find lines touching each other. A man climbs a hill that he may in solitude revel in the delights of the landscape, and, lo, a little child meets him there, and the supposed accident is the turning point in his life. A traveller turns aside that he may drink of the well by the way, and, behold, the stranger who was there before him, and who would have gone in one moment more, becomes the chief joy of his life, the ruler of his fortunes, the sovereign of his destiny. Thus our life is a mystery; we are strangers, yet friends. We live for many years apart, and by-and-by there comes a moment which unites us in holy

confidence, giving all mysteries a meaning, and showing all difficulties to be but steps up to heaven. I have been led into this strain of animating, yet tranquillising, reflection by the circumstances in connection with which the text is found. The asses were lost, what then? Who cares? Yet out of this simple circumstance there may arise events which shall startle the most indifferent reader. The asses being lost, Kish commanded his son Saul to take with him a servant, and go in pursuit. The filial spirit never sees anything contemptible in the paternal desire. Men should rule their lives not by the insignificance of the service, but by the sublimity of the one Ruler in whose hands are the laws and destinies of life. Saul might have looked at the object alone; instead of that he looked at his father, in that look we find the secret of his obedience and alacrity. When the disciples went to seek the ass for Jesus Christ, they thought not of the meanness of the duty, but of the dignity of the Master. In this verse there is nothing but the hollow sound of repeated disappointment. It emphatically describes the negative side of life. There are men to-day who are repeating this experience with most painful faithfulness. Go whither they may they find not the object of their pursuit. They climb the hill of difficulty, and, behold, their errand is lost. Many of us may be said to be within the limits of this dreary verse to-day. Life is to us hollow, empty, and mocking. The lifting up of our hand doth but bring us weariness, and the putting forth of our strength only adds to the vexation of our spirit. Is there not a meaning in all this? Is it possible that God can be taking any man along so painful and barren a road to an end which shall bring elevation and gladness? The road to honour is often long and hard. Men have to endure the discipline of disappointment before they can bear the reward of success. The great advantage of having a man of God in every city! The man of God makes his influence felt for good, and becomes honoured and trusted in matters which are not strictly religious. Two travellers have lost their way, and, behold, they inquire of a man of God! A very beautiful image is this of the position of Samuel. What is the vocation of the man of God? It is to tell other men their way! All men are morally lost; the man of God points out the way of recovery: all men are in intellectual confusion by reason of their moral depravity; the man of God shows the way to the light! As ministers of the Gospel we are appointed to tell men the way. This, too, is the appointment of heads of houses, conductors of educational institutions, and those who mould and lead the sentiment of the times. Saul was a gentleman, every whit! Eastern customs aside altogether, there was a vein of gentlemanliness in the nature of Saul. He was about to ask a favour, but a preliminary question arose in his mind. Absurd indeed is the idea of giving anything to the man of God for his services! George Whitefield, when he had but a cow-heel for dinner, would have the frugal meal set out with as much care as if it had been a banquet. There are two ways of doing everything. It was but little that Saul had to give, yet he gave it of his own free will, and with all the grace of a natural king. We are not to pay mere prices for knowledge and direction in life; we are to give gifts of the heart,—such donations as are inspired by our love, though they may be limited by our poverty. It should be noted that this little arrangement was made before the lost travellers went into the presence of Samuel. It came of the spontaneous motion of their own hearts. The question was not, What dost thou charge? What shall we give thee? But a plan was laid beforehand, and Samuel was not subjected to the indignity of a commercial inquiry. Christian churches might learn a great lesson from this example. Modern gentlemen may learn something from the ancient aristocracy. A wonderful kingdom is the kingdom of God! Though Samuel had before him the future king of Israel, and he himself was about to be deposed from his own supremacy, yet he communicated to Saul intelligence of the lost asses! Doth anything escape the care of God? Doth not God care for oxen? Doth a sparrow fall to the ground without our Father's notice? If we give the great concerns of our life into the hands of God, nothing that belongs to us shall be accounted unworthy of His notice. A man should inquire what background he has when a voice like Samuel's sounds in his ear. Saul was informed that on him was set all the desire of Israel: under such an announcement it was natural and proper that he should look to his antecedents, that, so to speak, he should gather himself up, and take correct measure of his manhood. A word of caution must be spoken here. Inquiry into our antecedents and resources should never be made with a fear of evading duty and difficulty. A very subtle temptation assails us from this side. Spurious modesty may reduce to the uttermost poverty and insuffi-

ciency, in order that by so doing it may lure us from paths of difficulty and hard service. When humility is saved from degenerating into fear, it becomes a source of strength. Moses complained that he was a man of slow speech; he desired that God would send His word by some other messenger, because of his incapacity and unworthiness. Jeremiah urged in response to the call of God, that he was but a little child. Saul declared that he was of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and sought to escape the duty of the hour through a sense of personal inadequacy to fulfil its demands. There is a medium between spurious self-depreciation and presumptuous boastfulness. That medium is reliance upon the sufficiency of God. Whom God calls He also qualifies. Observe, not increased intelligence, not additional personal stature, not any outward sign and proof that he was elected to be king of Israel; God gave him another heart. The question of life is often a question of feeling. What you want is another heart. Your life requires to be set on fire with the love of God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "Son, give me thine heart!" Thou wilt be saved because thou hast cast thy whole heart at the feet of the Saviour of the world, who came to teach men the love of God. The cry arose amongst the people, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" We may, by increasing our devotion, by multiplying our beneficent labours, by courageous service in the kingdom of God, excite a surprise which shall indicate that we are no longer amongst those who live only for this world, "whose god is their belly, and who glory in their shame." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. The people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice.—*Religious ordinances*:—There is a striking resemblance between the outlines of the Mosaic, and of the Christian Church. Each arose upon a Divine basis. Each had its form of imitation and symbolic rites. Each had its three orders of ministers in the sanctuary. And each boasts of a Divine Being at its head. As in the one, so in the other, the covenant is in the hands of a Mediator, and its principles and laws are deposited in a sacred code. There is, indeed, in the Christian Church, a higher degree of spirituality than is found under any other dispensation. Here, the daily sacrifice and oblation cease, absorbed, in their significance, in that great sacrifice, of which, to the eye of faith, they all were figures. But in the constitution of this Church, our blessed Lord did not overlook the ancient pattern of heavenly things, nor forget the nature of man. 1. The first point to which I would call your attention, is the fitness and utility of Religious Ordinances. There are in truth, no such obvious, simple, and universal means of preserving communities distinct, and manifesting their members to the world and to each other, as characteristic rights and peculiar badges. Nature prompts to the use of them; for the savage of the woods has the song and the ceremonies of his ancestors, and by the gashings and daubings with which he disfigures his form, denotes his tribe. Reason and policy have discovered their utility; for the armies of the ambitious have their uniforms and their standards; and almost every nation has its mode of naturalising subjects, its oaths of allegiance, and its arms. Indeed so fit and necessary are they, that few communities continue long without them, or survive the loss of them; and they who denounce all rites as useless, are obliged to recur to peculiarity of dress, of phrase, or of gesture, when they would be known to each other, and distinguished from the world. Hitherto our observations have been of a general nature applicable to any community. What, then, shall we say of the propriety and importance of rites and ordinances, in the service of religion? To the Jews, God appointed a system of ceremonies, to connect them together, and shadow forth the sublime subjects of faith to their understandings. And our adorable Redeemer instituted for His followers a baptism, which should represent their "death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness"; and a supper, in which they should commemorate the foundation of all their hopes and joys, His offering Himself in the body once for all. Religious ordinances are of unspeakable advantage, in uniting members of the same body, and attaching them affectionately to each other. They form a kind of visible chain connecting men together; the first and last links of which are connected with God. Community of interest begets confidence; and while we are pursuing the same objects, under consciousness of the same infirmities, but with reliance upon the same hopes, we are filled, involuntarily, with affection for each other. This is strikingly illustrated in the natural tendency, and no doubt was strong in our Redeemer's view at the

gracious institution, of the Lord's Supper. 2. There arises from the nature of the Christian ordinances, a peculiar necessity for an authorised ministry. These sacraments are of high and holy import. Like the ark of the covenant, they are not to be carried by unhallowed hands. They are seals of an engagement between God and men. They are compacts between the Almighty Father and His repentant children, in which He pledges Himself, upon condition of their faith and obedience, to give them the pardon of their sins, the blessings of His Spirit, and the enjoyment of eternal life. And who can sign the covenant of such mercies unto men, but they who act in God's behalf? And who can act in God's behalf, but they who act by God's authority? Not, that in those to whom this ministry is committed, there is any elevation above the ordinary qualities of their fellow beings. "We have this treasure," says St. Paul, speaking of the great Christian behests entrusted to the ministry, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 3. Here we are brought to notice the obligations, which the truths we have been considering devolve upon ministers and people. The first and most obvious inference is, that it is incumbent upon us all to respect and observe the institutions of the Gospel. But the truths we have been considering, press upon our observation the holiness, and importance, and duties of the ministry. They are the keepers of the fountain, which is set open for mankind to wash in from sin and from uncleanness, and they are the dispensers of the word, by which we are instructed in righteousness, and begotten again to the blessed hope of everlasting life. Under the Christian dispensation, much more than under the Jewish economy, should there be written upon the foreheads of the priesthood, and upon all their sacred vestments, "Holiness unto the Lord." But, finally, we must remark, that there arises from what has been said, an obligation upon the people to abide by, and co-operate with those, who are regularly appointed to minister in holy things. In vain will God have instituted ordinances in the Church, in vain will He have established in it pastors and teachers, if the body of Christians neglect, or profane, these sacred institutions, or with Gallo's temper, "care for none of these things." (*Bishop Dehon.*)

Ver. 26. It came to pass about the spring of the day.—*The spring of the day*:—"The time was to the day what spring is to the year. The diurnal revolution of the earth round its own axis corresponds with the annual revolution of the earth round the sun, and the different periods of the day—morning, noon and night—therefore resemble the different seasons of the year—spring, summer, autumn, and winter. According to this beautiful analogy, the spring of the day embraces the early hours after sunrise. Nowhere is the spring of the day so delightful as in Palestine, for later on it becomes oppressively hot. The people do all their travelling and most of their work in the early morning. Saul commenced that fateful journey homeward from the hill village of the prophet which led to the throne of Israel in the spring of the day. Ah! what difference that first setting out in life, from the hill of Jeph in the spring of the day from the dark closing of his life on Mount Gilboa in the dreary winter of the day." (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. Bid the servant pass on before us.—*Samuel and the young man Saul*:—"This was Samuel's third interview with this goodly young man. This time he spoke to him with great closeness of personal application, sending the servant out of the way that he might say things to him which nobody else might hear. He tried to speak to the young man's inmost soul. The prophet felt a deep solemnity, his whole heart saying every word that fell from his lip. I think I hear his earnest tones, and accents sweetened by a great love, for Samuel loved Saul, and it was his affection which made him speak so earnestly and pointedly. This time the preacher would hold you fast, as if he said to each one, "I will not let thee go unless thou givest thy heart to Christ, and become His servant from this very hour." I. First, let us think upon THE ATTENTION WHICH HE REQUESTED. He said to the servant, "Pass on before us," and he passed on. Bid the servant pass on; forget for a while your business, forget your family, forget your joys, forget your sorrows. I wish I could so speak that men would say of my preaching what they said of Whitefield's. One man said, "Whenever I went to church before, I calculated how many looms the church would hold"—for he was a weaver—"but when I heard Whitefield I never thought of a loom."

Another said, "While I have been in church I have often built a ship from stern to stern; but when I heard Mr. Whitefield I could not lay a plank; he took my mind right away from such things, and occupied me with higher thoughts." The next point in the attention requested was the desire that he would "stand still a while." I pray you bask in the gospel as men do in the sunlight when they would be warm. Let the gospel have its own legitimate effect upon you. Lay bare your bosom to it. Ask that your soul may have no stone of carelessness laid upon it, as though it were a dead thing in a sepulchre, but that it may come forth in resurrection life through the quickening word of the Divine Spirit. Is not this what the word of God deserves? Should it not have our living, loving attention? When God speaks let all be silent. I have heard that the great clock at St. Paul's can scarcely be heard in Cheapside, by reason of the traffic that is going on; and so the most solemn voices are drowned amidst the din and uproar of our business, and we do not often hear God's voice, unless we are accustomed to give ourselves a little quiet and holy stillness, and sit in our chamber alone, and say, "Now, Lord, commune with me." As the Word of God deserves such quiet attention, it certainly is only by such attention that it is likely to bless us. I remember a child who used to be noted for great attention during sermon, and his mother, noticing his deep earnestness, asked him why. He said, "Because, mother, I heard the preacher once say that if there was a piece of the discourse that was likely to be of good to our souls, Satan would try to make us lose it; and as I do not know which part God will bless me by, I try to hear it all, and to remember it all." Oh, when people come to listen to the preacher with such a spirit as that, it is sweet work to preach. But many things arise to prevent this attention. You cannot get some folks to be still, they are so frivolous; you cannot make them think. Some men dread the process of thinking, almost as much as they would a touch of the "cat" on their backs. They cannot bear to consider and meditate. God has distinguished them above brutes by giving them the faculty of thought, but this high privilege they try to ignore. Do stand still a while, and let nothing come in to break the silence of your spirit, while you listen to the voice of God. I would earnestly persuade every one here who is not saved to get an hour alone somehow.

II. THE SUBJECT UPON WHICH SAMUEL DISCOURSED WITH SAUL, OR RATHER THE SUBJECT ABOUT WHICH I WOULD DISCOURSE AT THIS TIME, IF I AM SO HAPPY AS TO HAVE SECURED YOUR EAR. The subject is the Word of God. That God should give us a Word at all is very gracious. It is wonderful that he should condescend to speak to us, because we cannot understand much: we are like little children at the very best. In the particular word of God which Samuel spoke to Saul there was some likeness to the message which I am bound to deliver to you.

1. Samuel spoke to Saul about a kingdom, of which this young man should be the king. Little did Saul dream that on this day the kingdom should be given him, and little dost thou dream of it perhaps as yet; but I pray thee let me show thee the word of God, for thou mayest yet find a kingdom there, a kingdom for thee, a crown of life for thee which fadeth not away, and a seat at the right hand of God with Christ in the day of His appearing.

2. Samuel not only spoke about the kingdom, but he showed him the word of God by an anointing. Thou sayest, "I am not capable of high and noble things." Thou shalt be made capable, for in the day when God anoints thee thou shalt receive strength—"To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Thou shalt receive enlightenment and illumination by the Divine unction of the Holy Ghost.

3. Samuel spake to Saul about another matter, namely, about a change that he should undergo. Hast thou never heard that God can create thee for the second time? can destroy in thee the power for sin, and bring thee under another dominion, and make thee as eager after right as thou hast been after wrong, and make thee as happy in the service of Christ as ever thou wast in the service of the devil, ay, and ten thousand times more so? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Stand thou still a while that I may shew thee the Word of God.—Communications from God to Man:—The text suggests two remarks concerning Divine communication to man.

I. THEY ARE NECESSARY TO QUALIFY HIM FOR THE DISCHARGE OF HIS OBLIGATIONS. Saul was about assuming an office of enormous responsibility, and Samuel felt that a knowledge of the "Word of God" was of primary importance to him. "I may shew thee the word of God."

1. The word of God is essential to enlighten us as to our duty. On no subject has man made greater mistakes than on that of duty. The greatest sages of the old world

blundered terribly on this point. But how clearly it is unfolded in the Divine Word! "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." "Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God." "Whatsoever ye would that men would do unto you do ye even so to them." 2. The word of God is necessary to stimulate us in the discharge of our duty. Where else can we find motives strong enough for this purpose. II. THAT PATIENT WAITING IS NECESSARY FOR THE RECEPTION OF THESE COMMUNICATIONS. "But stand thou still a while that I may shew thee the word of God." God's voice cannot be heard in the hurry and bustle of life. There must be the halt and the hush, the pause and the quiet. 1. "Stand thou still a while" to listen. The ear must be opened. "Incline thine ear," &c. 2. "Stand thou still a while," to interpret. Ponder the meaning, pass from the sound to the sense, from the symbol to the substance. 3. "Stand thou still a while," to apply. Apply the meaning to your own condition, experience, circumstances. Conclusion:—The words may be legitimately applied to all the good who are pressed down with the trials of life. To every tried saint I might say, "Stand thou still a while," and (1) Thou shalt have a solution of those intellectual difficulties that embarrass thee. (2.) Thou shalt be delivered from all the moral infections that grieve thee. (3.) Thou shalt be freed from all afflictions that oppress thee. (*Homilist.*) *Samuel and Saul*.—1. SAMUEL FOUND MUCH THAT WAS GOOD IN SAUL. A cluster of excellencies incidentally present themselves in this chapter. 1. Saul had reverence for his father. He promptly obeyed his father; yet he was "from his shoulders and upwards taller," &c. 2. Saul was no idler. He was no stranger to work; yet his father was "a mighty man of power." 3. Saul was not particular as to the kind of work he did. We have his photograph in verse 2. Yet this splendid young man went in search of the lost asses: no person who is usefully employed is ignobly employed. 4. Saul found teachers everywhere. He listened to and was advised by his servant: he was guided by young maidens. 5. Saul was very modest and humble (ver. 21). II. SAMUEL TOUCHES THE ONE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF A TRUE LIFE. "Stand thou still a while This is the world's only safe guiding star. Whoever would live a true life must often say with the child Samuel: "Speak Lord for" 1. Sometimes we are tossed by restlessness. Soul-satisfaction, heart-rest, are far from us. These are eagerly but vainly sought in company, pleasure, business, intellectual pursuits; what is wanted? A teacher to say in tones that will compel attention. "Stand thou" 2. Sometimes we are moved by covetousness. Men get the hunger of gold, and houses, and lands upon them. O, that some prophet of God would stand across their path, and in ringing tones that would make them pause, tremble, and repent, say: "Stand" 3. Sometimes we are pressed by difficulties. We must take care how we get free; Satan will be quite ready to help us; but he will not do it for nothing; he is a lawyer who never goes without his fee. Find one who with eyes bent upon this book will say: "Stand" III. SAUL'S GREAT DISASTERS AND HIS FINAL OVERTHROW WERE THE RESULTS OF HIS NEGLECT OF "THE WORD OF GOD." Saul made a good beginning, but a terribly sad ending. Alas! what numbers do the same. (*R. Berry.*) *It is not easy to stand still*:—Now, there is Saul, a great, big, six-and-a-half foot man, and broad in proportion. Head and shoulders above his fellows, full of health and strength and flesh and blood, full of his own plans and his own purposes; and Samuel virtually says, "Saul, halt! I can do nothing until I arrest you and get you to stand still, body and soul, to listen to the word of God." Now, there, Sauls, I speak as a Samuel. I have all the same—ay, and more—reason, if I am God's messenger at all, and if you believe in God and that there is anything in the preacher's gift, the offered Lord Jesus Christ, then give me your full attention. "Stand still," and it is not easy. Did you ever, when you were young, take your father's spirit level out of the long pocket, as I used to take my father's out of the moleskins, and try to hold it straight and steady. There you were, watching the little bead in the glass, and you think you have it dead level in the middle, when, without any motion you are aware of, it bangs away to the far end, then back again to the other. Why? There is a movement—the very coursing of your blood through your veins disturbs the balance. My friend, the devil counts on that trouble to spoil the Gospel. He knows that we are just set on wires—that he can fool or annoy with this, that, or the other thing. He knows how easily the balance is upset, and he is for ever upsetting it. I sympathise with Samuel, coming to that big, healthy young giant, and saying, "Saul, stand still a bit, that I may show you the word of God." Oh, I know

you are still as regards your body, but I will do no good till I get your mind, which is as sensitive as the quicksilver, arrested: and with God's help I will. (John McNeil.)

CHAPTER X.

Vers. 1—13. **Then Samuel took a vial of oil.**—*The discipline of a promoted life*:—Men are not usually taken from the valley of ordinary toil, and instantaneously placed, as by the flight of an angel, upon the cloud-wrapped peak of national greatness. There must be a climbing process; its accomplishment may be tedious, its progress slow, its experiences sorrowful, but such discipline is necessary. And as we climb the rugged path, exhilarating breezes refresh, sweeping prospects gladden; and the soul thrilled by such beauty, achieves fitness for the higher sphere of duty. Summer does not suddenly come around us with its grandeur, touching nature into fragrance, but advances gently through the frozen portals of winter and the uncalculated possibilities of spring. So with the promotions of human life. God descends unknown to the busy multitude, appropriates the Saul, and brings into contact with the spiritual, that under its tuition he may be fitted for kingship. This promoted life was—I. UNOSTENTATIOUS IN ITS COMMENCEMENT. It might be accepted as an axiom that all great results issue from small beginnings. Throughout this coronation the greatest simplicity prevails. Only two are present—a ruddy youth, an aged man—both in the great temple of nature, with God for witness. Consider the disciplinary nature of this coronation. 1. Its simplicity would appear contradictory. It would seem unlikely that the highest office of life should be introduced in such poor attire. 2. It would appear unauthenticated. There was no human witness besides the two interested parties. They were alone. The only guarantee he had was the reputation of the prophet; and if that failed, he had no refuge, for his own word would not be sufficient to establish anything so unlikely. He would, like Joseph, have been designated the Dreamer. This consideration would impose silence even if disappointed. 3. Then the suggestion of promotion was interrogative. "Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?" (ver. 1). Thus we can easily imagine how this coronation scene would test the character, try the patience, exercise the thought, and discipline the soul of this incipient king. This promoted life was—II. CONFIRMATORY IN ITS PROGRESS. Moral discipline does not retain its darkness. Night clears away, and in the bright shining of morning, fear is dispelled and hope realised. So with Saul, he has passed the midnight of preparation, and now departing from the prophet, his claim to kingship will be vindicated by foretold events. Confirmed:—1. By the restoration of lost property. The most trivial incidents may prove confirmatory to the reality of Divine promotion. A shining star authenticates the power of God as much as the solar system. So the finding of asses on our homeward journey may stamp our elevation with truth, as much as the mightiest catastrophe of history. Here also is seen the beneficence and considerateness of the Divine plan. In that the missions of life are attested by measures adapted to condition and want. Saul had been in search of the asses; their restoration was used as the Divine indenture. Saul had to pass the sepulchre of Rachel on his way home. Why? Was it not to solemnise him in his transition to kingship? To remind him of his future destiny? The journey of life is full of tombs, to hush the mirth of the traveller by the reflections of another world. Here we see the wisdom of the Divine plan in that he makes the monitors of life confirm its elevation. He was confirmed:—2. By the manifestation of hospitality. These people were no doubt going to worship, to sacrifice to God; and, being prompted by the Divine Spirit, paid homage to their unknown but future king. Men often unconsciously outstrip themselves. In ministering to the necessities of a man they sometimes minister to a king. This scene in connection with Rachel's tomb shows the contrasts of life; that, while death is near, there is sufficient to keep in life and comfort; that while there are tombs on our life-road there is also a sanctuary. The former representing the power of evil, the latter the power of good. Past both the promoted one must walk, that, filled with

sadness at the grave, joy may come with stronger impulse at the sanctuary. Lastly, he was confirmed:—3. By the sympathetic power of prophecy. "And thou shalt prophesy with them" (ver. 6). The young king was now to meet a band of students from the college of the prophets. This is a typical of all life; it is full of the educational, and that educational is spiritual in its nature. This company of prophets had instruments of music. So a minister's life, like a peal of bells, should give forth the choicest music at the lightest touch. Who ought to carry the harp, the tabrets of life, if a teacher of the highest music, the divinest harmony, does not? III. PREPARATORY IN ITS ISSUE. Saul seems now to have reached the level of prophetic character; from henceforth he is fit for the regal. He is prepared:—1. By the impartation of a new nature. "God gave him another heart" (ver. 9). What does this mean, but that Saul was converted? Are we told that it was a mere external fitness; an intellectual foresight, or heroic courage, necessary for his office? Was it merely the creation of a taste for the new sphere of duty? If so, it should have said that God gave him another inclination. No! God gave him another heart, swept of the past, filled with the seeds of a larger manhood. 2. By the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "And the Spirit of God came upon him" (ver. 10). Surely no king commenced his rule with greater blessing or deeper fitness. But we shall yet have to witness the tempestuous sunset of this great life. If kings now were selected by God, and qualified by his Spirit, what a glory would enshrine our national constitution! Lessons:—(1.) Learn that the Spiritual ought to be the Supreme Power of national life. (2.) That when God calls to the higher duties of life he qualifies for them. (3.) That on the road to the sanctuary you are likely to meet the newly-made king. (4.) That life is capable of the highest development. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Saul anointed by Samuel*:—There is a remarkable minuteness of detail in this and other narratives in Samuel, suggesting the authenticity of the narrative, and the authorship of one who was personally connected with the transactions. Everything was planned to impress on Saul that his elevation to the royal dignity was not to be viewed by him as a mere piece of good fortune. Both Saul and the people must see the hand of God very plainly in Saul's elevation, and the king must enter on his duties with a profound sense of the supernatural influences through which he had been elevated, and his obligation to rule the people in the fear, and according to the will, of God. To be thus anointed by God's recognised servant, was to receive the approval of God Himself. Saul now became God's messiah—the Lord's anointed. For the term messiah, as applied to Christ, belongs to His kingly office. Though the priests likewise were anointed, the title derived from that act was not appropriated by them, but by the kings. It was counted a high and solemn dignity, making the king's person sacred, in the eyes of every God-fearing man. Yet this was not an indelible character; it might be forfeited by unfaithfulness and transgression. The only Messiah, the only Anointed One, who was incapable of being set aside, was He whom the kings of Israel typified. It is evident that Saul was surprised at the acts of Samuel. It was reasonable that Saul should be supplied with tangible proofs that in anointing him as king Samuel had complied with the will of God. These tangible proofs Samuel proceeded to give. We must try, first, to form some idea of Saul's state of mind in the midst of these strange events. The thought of being king of Israel must have set his whole being vibrating with high emotion. He was like a cloud surcharged with electricity; he was in that state of nervous excitement which craves a physical outlet, whether in singing, or shouting, or leaping,—anything to relieve the brain and nervous system, which seem to tremble and struggle under the extraordinary pressure. But mingling with these, there must have been another, and perhaps deeper, emotion at work in Saul's bosom. He had been brought into near contact with the Supernatural. The thought of the Infinite Power that ordains and governs all had been stirred very vividly within him. The three tokens of Divine ordination met with in succession at Rachel's tomb, in the plain of Tabor, and in the neighbourhood of Gibeah, must have impressed him very profoundly. Probably he had never had any very distinct impression of the great Supernatural Being before. It is always a solemn thing to feel in the presence of God, and to remember that He is searching us. At such times the sense of our guilt, feebleness, dependence, usually comes to us, full and strong. Must it not have been so with Saul? The whole susceptibilities of Saul were in a state of high excitement; the sense of the Divine presence was on him, and for the moment a desire

to render to God some acknowledgment of all the mercy which had come upon him. When therefore he met the company of prophets coming down the hill, he was impelled by the surge of his feelings to join their company and take part in their song. But it was an employment very different from what had hitherto been his custom. That utter worldliness of mind which we have referred to as his natural disposition would have made him scorn any such employment in his ordinary mood as utterly alien to his feelings. Too often we see that worldly-minded men not only have no relish for spiritual exercises, but feel bitterly and scornfully towards those who affect them. The reason is not far to seek. They know that religious men count them guilty of sin, of great sin, in so neglecting the service of God. To be condemned, whether openly or not, galls their pride, and sets them to disparage those who have so low an opinion of them. It is not said that Saul had felt bitterly towards religious men previous to this time. But whether he did so or not, he appears to have kept aloof from them quite as much as if he had. And now in his own city he appears among the prophets, as if sharing their inspiration, and joining with them openly in the praises of God. It is so strange a sight that every one is astonished. "Saul among the prophets!" people exclaim. "Shall wonders ever cease?" And yet Saul was not in his right place among the prophets. Saul was like the stony ground seed in the parable of the sower. He had no depth of root. His enthusiasm on this occasion was the result of forces which did not work at the heart of his nature. It was the result of the new and most remarkable situation in which he found himself, not of any new principle of life, any principle that would involve a radical change. Ordination to the ministry, or to any other spiritual office, solemnises one at first, even though one may not be truly converted, and nerves one with strength and resolution to throw off many an evil habit. But the solemn impression wanes with time, and the carnal nature asserts its claims. How earnest and how particular men ought ever to be in examining themselves whether their serious impressions are the effect of a true change of nature, or whether they are not mere temporary experiences, the casual result of external circumstances. Alas, Saul was like the young man also in the particular that made all the rest of little effect—"One thing thou lackest." (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *The appointment of Saul*:—A sovereign Lord has already determined the destination of the crown. The royalty is to light on the head of Saul. Forthwith a wakeful Providence works onward to this end. Let us mark its mysterious movements. See in this transaction God's absolute sovereignty. See also how its end is reached by the confluence of two providential currents. An ordinary incident of rural life summons Saul from his home—his wanderings lead him to the neighbourhood of Samuel's dwelling—his servant knows this—Saul consents to an interview. This is one stream. The other meets it. Samuel is forewarned. It was a fair morning this to a hopeful day. By this series of events, most powerful provision was made for attaching the newly-appointed monarch to the service of God. His selection was manifestly the result of a heavenly grace, which reposed on no ground but its own sovereign will. And the manner in which the way to it had been smoothed was well fitted to impress him with the nearness, penetrating knowledge, and controlling power of God. But this great lesson is not yet finished. Signs from heaven are granted. Saul's excitement grows with the occurrence of each new incident. And thus, no doubt, his mind was prepared for that mysterious operation of the Spirit by which he joined the company of prophets in their ardent utterances of sacred truth. His heart was not renewed. But inspiration is different from regeneration. And if a Balaam's worldly heart were made a consecrated vehicle of truth, why might not Saul's? Elevated conceptions and ardent enthusiasm of feeling on sacred subjects may dwell in the neighbourhood of an icy heart, that has never returned in love the smile of a forgiving God. Most direful anomaly! Our maimed and dislocated nature has lost the power of interior transmission. Sunlight may glare on the understanding, while chilly darkness nestles in the heart. But Saul's true character was not discerned. The first step has now been taken. But the appointment must be made public. How rich was this opening period in manifestations of an overruling Providence! The new and strong emotions, the strange salutes and offerings of passing travellers, and the sacred welcome of a company of prophets—the disposing of the lot to make it fall on him—the divine disclosure of his hiding place—all these made up a crowded region of miraculous interposition in which God treasured up mighty impulses to mould and guide his future life. He is

placed in the centre of scenes most touching, solemn, and memorable. In this small spot lie powers enough to move a lifetime. These basement facts, like those of the national history, are fruitful of mighty and lasting impulses. The vessel is launched, the anchor is weighed, the breeze has filled her sails. If she founders at sea, we shall know where the blame lies. (*P. Richardson, B.A.*)

King-making:—1. The lines of Providence are convergent and divergent. They come from different points of the compass towards one centre, and radiate outwards from unity into diversity. The chief events of four thousand years of human history all tended to one grand consummation, and when God became incarnate realised their end. From that event the lines of Providence have been diverging ever since, and are designed to embrace in their benignant influences the wide world and the various races of men. The Old Testament history all coiled into Jesus of Nazareth; the New Testament history unrolls from him. Chronology is all comprised in Before Christ and After Christ. This arrangement is common to the providence of God. One series of events conspires to develop another. The same Providence is seen in many periods of Hebrew history, and in none more strikingly than in the influences which brought Saul and Samuel together, and the issues that resulted from a monarchy in Israel. The outward circumstance was striking, but the diversified providences had been divinely arranged to further it. Infallible wisdom had guided these two men, and in their meeting prepared for kingly rule in Israel. In the appearance of Saul at the time appointed, Samuel had full testimony to the word of God. The event proved the prediction and strengthened his faith in God. Every new evidence works conviction in the believer, and does much to conform his mind to God. But there was another person to be convinced of the Divine arrangement—Saul. The evidence was vouchsafed in a manner fitted to impress, and so cumulative and varied as to work conviction. Samuel's conduct towards him, and the circumstances that transpired on his way home, after he left the prophet, were unmistakable signs that God was preparing some dignity for him among his people. These three signs were designed to warrant his faith in the announcement, to encourage his hope, and to prepare him to conform to the arrangement of God for the government of His people, and to certain special directions given by Samuel with reference to his coronation. 2. Whom God calls to any service He will make fit for it. If He advance to another station, He will give another heart to those who sincerely desire to serve Him with their power. Just as of old God endowed Bezaleel and Aholiab with skill to design, and build, and carve the work of the tabernacle of the wilderness, so did he endow Saul with the qualities of a kingly mind. These were apart from the moral qualities that relate to the right service of God. The latter are not so much endowments attached to a man, as the necessary fruits of a thorough conversion and a new heart. Saul had the one, but he had not the other. He had another heart, but not a new heart. He gave evidence of possessing the gifts of kingship, but none of the grace of holy living. While he could henceforth command armies and practice diplomacy, he cared not for keeping a conscience void of offence toward God and man. His heart was not right with God. It is not enough to have natural endowments, or learned attainments of skill or wisdom. What are the wit of Voltaire, the poetry of Byron, the science of Halley, the philosophy of Hobbes, the command of Napoleon, the statesmanship of Pitt, the eloquence of Sheridan, the taste of Beckford, the learning of Michaëlis, the common sense of Franklin, the mechanical skill of Stephenson, the business talents of a Rothschild, if you have not the grace of God to transform your heart and to make you holy? Gifts may make you illustrious, and useful, and powerful among men, but they do not make you fit for the fellowship of God, or prepare you for the holiness of heaven. They are of value. Sanctified by grace, the highest gifts have their place and their usefulness in the Church. Saul had striking evidences presented to his mind of the prospect which Samuel opened up to his hope. The clear fulfilment of all that had been foretold must have convinced him that he was designed for dignity. He weighed it well, was persuaded of it, and waited for its accomplishment. 3. The manner of the kingdom was written in a book for his study and observance (ver. 25). This was their constitution—the covenant between monarch and subjects. The rights of the king were specified therein, and so were the rights of the people. The government of Israel was to be no absolute monarchy, nor was it to be a democracy. This was also the case when David was made king of Israel (2 Samuel v. 3), and when Joash was proclaimed in Judah,

after the despotic usurpation of Athaliah (2 Kings xi. 17). It was as sinful in the one to break the covenant as in the other. In the word of God there is a clear recognition of the rights of the ruled as well as of the ruler. No man is at liberty to tyrannise over another. The model people of the ancient world had rules for kings such as no constitution has ever yet continued. The engagement between God, king, and people, was laid up before the Lord, to be kept under his eye, and to be a witness against monarch and subject should they break their engagements. It is a solemn thought that all our engagements are laid up before the Lord. They are held in all their integrity by him, and he never fails to fulfil his part. Once entered into by us, we become bound, and are responsible, and must render an account for the manner in which we have kept them. Your signature to a bill, given by impulse, cannot be nullified before a court of law. It is binding, and you can be distrained for payment. In like manner all solemn resolutions and spiritual pledges are binding, and are laid up before the Lord. Under these mutual obligations Samuel sent king and people to their several homes. 4. That was a happy day in Israel. Samuel had reason to be glad, and king and people had abundant cause for joy. The monarchy had been established. God had smiled on the first royal act of Saul. The nation had united in a public service of gratitude. On a theatre so full of historic interest, they all rejoiced greatly. Their difficulties now seemed ended, and their hearts flowed over in exuberant joy. If they abode in the love and obedience of God, joy would possess their souls. (*R. Steel.*)

Ver. 9. God gave him another heart.—*Another heart:*—But not a better heart. He found himself suddenly fitted for the new place to which Providence had summoned him. In this there was nothing magical or extraordinary. It is indeed said that God gave him another heart, but we are not to understand the words as indicating a Divine operation independent of outward means and natural influences, or at all distinguishable, in the consciousness of its subject, from the effects or external circumstances. It is not more true that the man makes the place than that the place makes the man. Both, indeed, are most pregnant and concerning truths. Saul, transplanted into a new station, brought into new relations to life and society, felt the simultaneous upspringing within him of sentiments and purposes suited to his position, and became conscious of capabilities which had before lain dormant, and might have always remained so, but for this transformation of his outward state. Made a king, he became kingly. His soul expanded to the horizon of his new dignity and office. But, alas! there was no spiritual element in his change, and, therefore, it yielded no happy fruit for him, or to the church of God. It was but the direction of the same earthly mind to larger objects, grander schemes, a wider range. We may properly take occasion from this case, to discriminate between certain other changes to which the spirit of man is subject, and that great spiritual change which alone affects him savingly, planting in him the germ of holiness and immortal felicity; or to point out the difference between another heart and a new heart. 1. And, first, I will direct your attention to the nature and effects of spurious religious excitement. There is excitement almost necessarily in the serious and earnest contemplation of religious truth. Its revelations are fitted to stir the spirit of man deeply; the interests to which it pertains are too momentous to be contemplated without emotion. The nature of men is sympathetic. Hence feeling is contagious, and not only so, but excitement, where it exists already, rises, by the reacting influence of those who come within its sphere and imbibe its infection. But excitement is bounded by limits fixed in the constitution of our nature; and when these are reached a revolution takes place, which issues either in stagnation or in a new excitement of a different description. And when these opposite emotions are produced by religious causes they are thought to indicate a work of the Spirit and involve conversion. It is quite remarkable, how little the moral and truly spiritual nature of man may have to do with such a process, how little of anything else there may be in it beside imagination and nervous sensibility. And yet, on the strength of it, a man often accounts himself a new man; and, whether he be right in that judgment or not, not infrequently, he thereupon becomes and permanently remains another man. His life henceforward assumes a new bent. He adopts new opinions, he talks a new language, he affects new associates, he frequents new walks, he lends himself to the promotion of new interests. And yet he is not a new man. Only his outward life has taken a new impress, as Saul's did, in which,

the same worldly spirit finds a concealment and disguise. 2. There is another very different transformation to which men are subject, which yet is of no greater value; and tends to no better results—that which is brought about by the slow operation of time and the gradual alteration of outward circumstances. The lesson of life is a sobering lesson. The fire of youth burns out as the period of youth expires. Every day some leaf falls from the flower he is seeking to grasp. Continually the stern hand of irresistible Providence shuts up some avenue that allures his steps. But the worst disappointment is that which waits upon success—the bitter pain of finding a thing, when it is gotten, not worth the pains of getting. Sometimes there is but a change of follies and vices, the substitution of a calmer and more private form of sensuality or dissipation for another of a more boisterous and public character; but the impress of sin and worldliness remains, and is too visible to allow the supposition of any moral improvement. The result of time upon human character is very various, yet it seldom fails in one way or another to be evident and marked, and among persons whose course is not an abandoned one, is generally distinguished by a nearer approximation to the apparent effects of religion; and thus few men live on over the meridian of life without coming to have another heart, one which, in many instances, it may not be very difficult for themselves or others to mistake for a new and a better heart. What I said may be wanting in either of these, is a spiritual element; and as the absence of this fatally vitiates these cases, and every other case where it appears, so its presence in either of them, or in any other change which the soul of man may undergo, declares the work to be of God, and furnishes a true mark of meekness for life eternal. Let us then look a little at this as it stands contradistinguished from all alterations, whose seat is either the imagination or the outward deportment, whose affinity to religion is limited to a certain accidental coincidence or similarity in some particulars, and whose religious phases are confined to the inferior and superficial portion of human nature. (1.) And first, look at this change in reference to the effect upon the heart of the grand and peculiar features of the Gospel. An irreligious mind has either no clear or definite views of the scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ; or if it comprehends it intellectually, and is able to think and speak of it with a scientific precision, it does not perceive and feel its fitness and necessity. It wears an arbitrary appearance. The Gospel is unreal to it. But with the rise of spiritual affections the film is cleared away. The truths of the Gospel come forth from their obscurity and vagueness, and the heart at once learns what they are, loses its indifference to them, appreciates their value, loves them, and lives upon them. (2.) Look, secondly, at this change in respect to the power and influence of the Divine will upon the soul. The spirit of religion is an obedient spirit. The spirit of irreligion is a disobedient spirit. If a child pursue a course of conduct coincident with its parent's will purely for its own gratification, that is not obedience; or if it complies with his commands simply from fear of punishment, that is not obedience. Man's eyes may not distinguish it from obedience, but it is not obedience. Obedience requires a filial and submissive heart. There is the recognition of a new authority, the acknowledgment of a new rule. The man does the same act for a different reason. (3.) Look, thirdly, at this change as it affects a man's view of eternity. The view of the worldly man is comprised within the bounds of time. If he ever looks beyond it, it is with a stealthy and uneasy glance. There is a quickening of that man's spiritual nature to whom eternity comes forth out of this vague and unreal condition, and becomes a near and interesting reality, full of interests for which he would fain make provision, to be habitually borne in mind and cared for, to secure the benefit of which he counts it a privilege to live and labour. (*R. A. Hallam, D.D.*) *Getting another heart*:—He had come home from college, the minister's son. He had been a wild, harum-scarum kind of boy before he went. Many a sore heart did the minister get as the boisterous exploits of his wayward son oozed out to him from all parts of the parish. But at length he has gone to college, and has come home now at the end of winter. The parish has heard of his shooting ahead of his fellows in the college classes, and they were all proud of their minister's boy. He is in the study along with his old father, but he is not receiving this time the usual parental little lecture. He is opening a tiny little case, while his father's eyes are dancing with gladness. It is the gold medal for the best student of the year, and, as the looks of the father and son meet in tenderness, the once careless lad whispers in his father's ear what brings a sob from the minister, but not a sob of sorrow: "I have got something else than the gold medal this winter. I thought I would best tell

it now. I have also got the new heart." There had been a revival that winter in the city, and many of the students had been converted, and among them the gold medallist of the year, our minister's brilliant boy. (*John Robertson.*)

Ver. 10. The spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.—*Saul among the prophets*:—Suppose, now, you had come to school, thinking only of being the child of a cottager, and of earning your bread by hard labour all your days, and one upon whose word you could firmly rely came in and told you you were to be king over a mighty nation—with what feelings would you leave the school that day? Would not your thoughts and expectations be as entirely changed as if you were another child? And if, as you were leaving, you were able to speak, as it were, with a new tongue, and were endued with all wisdom and all knowledge, should we not be all ready to say you were another child? Thus was it with Saul. God gave him many gifts, but I hear not that He gave him grace—He gave him also another heart, but I read not that He gave him a heart renewed after the image of Him that created him. "And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them." There is something particularly solemn in this verse, and calculated to lead to great searchings of heart. Many passages of Scripture seem to point out that some poor sinners will have no idea of their mistake till they appear at the very bar of their God. Those of whom you read in Matt. xxv. 41—46, had no suspicion of their danger, and would fain, even then, have justified themselves: but of all the awfully self-deceived, those are the most so, who even think they have done much for Christ, and come to claim a reward, and find that neither they nor their works are acknowledged by Him. These are not a few, but "many;" they had prophesied—cast out devils—done many wonderful things—but had never experienced that only saving wonder the being born again. Beware, there is something infectious in the outside of religion; even the love of imitation may lead to this, or a desire to keep in favour with a godly family; and I have known some conclude, of course such an one must be good, because he lives among such good people. Alas! alas! the secret-telling day shall disclose a different tale, and the Sauls and the Balaams shall stand forth in their true colours, to receive the due reward of their deeds (*Helen Plumtre.*)

Ver. 11. Is Saul also among the prophets?—*A Saul among the prophets*:—So they said in the wild irregular season of his obscure youth, before his accession to the throne, when the Spirit of the Lord, that bloweth where it listeth, suddenly arrested the young Saul, in the midst of his dissolute companions; they repeated their scornful outcry in after years, as recorded in 1 Samuel xix. 24, when the spirit of repentance again seized the royal backslider, and brought him stripped and abased to the earth before Samuel at Naloth. The saying rightly interpreted may suggest some useful practical instruction. **I. WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING "AMONG THE PROPHETS?"** By "the company of prophets" in verse 5, or "a company of scribes," says the Targum, are meant the scholars of the prophets, who were at that period the only accredited teachers of religion. Mr. Harmer thinks the following custom among the Mohammedans illustrates this passage: "When the children have gone through the Koran their relations borrow a fine house and furniture and carry them about the town in procession, with the book in their hand, the rest of their companions following, and all sorts of music of the country going before." Eastern customs have little varied; they seem to abide immutable, and identical, as their sunny climes, and very probably, the procession of the school of the prophets in the context was on a similar occasion. "Is Saul also among the prophets?"—that is, Is he turned psalm singer and a supplicant? Is the rough, riotous herdsman of Benjamin become a companion of prophets and an utterer of the solemn things of God? Are we to have no more merry songs together, nor the light dance and jocund festival? Saul, our old fellow-reveller, become quaint and grim as a Levite? "What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" That this is the general meaning of prophesying in this place; see also the sense in which the word is used in reference to the priests of Baal, I. Kings xviii., 29: "And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the evening sacrifice"—they prophesied, that is, were importunate in prayer to their God. Thus the phrase, "Saul among the prophets," is equivalent to what the angels, in a holier and more

charitable spirit, said of the Saul of Tarsus, when the Lord changed his heart, brought him to his knees, and they described his conversion to the truth by the terms, "Behold he prayeth." A similar astonishment seized them who had known the apostle for a blasphemer and persecutor, and when they heard that he preached the faith which he once destroyed they too might have said, "Is Saul also amongst the prophets," that is, among the praying people, the people of God? There was in Saul, at different times, the development of a different man, according as "the law in his members," or "the law in his mind," obtained the mastery. Saul "did run well, but suffered something to hinder him." He began his reign in the Spirit, he ended it in the flesh. As a king he was weighed in the balances and found wanting; as a man, Mercy might have interposed and turned the scale. It is no unwarrantable stretch of Scriptural charity to imagine it possible that other tongues than those of living men might have talked of the departed Saul, as again "among the prophets." I am not ashamed to think so of the man, whom the inspired psalmist eulogised in his sepulchre. Only if it were so, his story illustrates the apostle's case of those "who are saved with difficulty pulling them out of the fire." II. TO THE PENITENT SINNER AND RETURNING BACKSLIDER. 1. To the penitent sinner. Imagine his repentance genuine. The difference is so marked that his old companions scarcely recognise their former hail-fellow, and insinuate at once a charge of hypocrisy and a sneer of contempt, whether or no in the scornful cry, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" "Is so-and-so among the saints?" "Have they caught him with their psalm-singing?" or, "Is he playing upon them with his guile?" The penitent hears this; it is meant he should hear it, they take care of that; and his first feeling is, "This is a penalty for my former association with them; 'Be sure your sin will find you out'; it has found me out, even since I left it." "The way of transgressors is hard," even after they abandon it. It is but natural that Satan should grumble at the loss of a servant, and his children only echo their father's sentiment. "They think it strange (and so it is) that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." But you meet these people day after day. If you are a workman, you meet them at your work; if one of a higher class of the community, you meet them in business or society; and they repeat their scornful insinuations. They don't and they won't believe you to be sincere, for they are strangers to what has taken place within you, distinctly enough to your convictions, but a mystery to them. They hate you, as Ahab hated Micaiah, because the sacred contrast of your life, always, however, unconsciously, prophesies evil things concerning them, and they would visit, as the world always did, their anger at the prediction on the head of the prophet, and you will be called upon to bear many a heavy version of the contemptuous proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" 2. But, further, let us suppose you have failed in maintaining your ground; that you did run well, but suffered something to hinder you; that you had followed your Saviour, like the youthful John, up to the very moment of His seizure for the crucifixion, but there your heart failed you, and like him you turned and "fled away naked," leaving behind you all your better convictions and determinations. You have done this, and you have since lived a backslider; and may we ask, "Is it well with thee?" Are you happy in your apostasy? (*J. B. Owen, M.A.*) *One act does not make a saint*:—Saul was not a saint because he did once prophesy, nor is every one a believer that talks of faith. (*T. Adams.*) *Transient reformations*:—The snow to-day covered all the ground, and the black soil looked fair and white. It is thus with some men under transient reformations; they look as holy, and as heavenly, and as pure as though they were saints; but when the sun of trial arises, and a little heat of temptation cometh upon them, how soon do they reveal their true blackness, and all their surface goodness melteth away! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 16. **He told him not.**—*An inquisitive man and how to treat him*:—Saul has now reached his home, and is determined to conceal the history of the past few days from the knowledge of others. If the Prophet's communications were to become generally known they would render Saul's position most uncomfortable. Many would discredit them; some would envy his promotion; while others might devise measures to take his life, or prevent the realisation of his hope. I. THIS MAN'S INQUISITIVENESS. Human biography is so interesting that, touched by its spell, men instinctively stand to inquire. 1. The Interrogator. "Saul's uncle." People frequently presume upon their relationship to ask any questions they think proper. And their kinship is made a plea for unwelcome intrusions, or

impudent interferences, totally incompatible with manly etiquette. 2. The inquiries made. Some relatives are always inquiring into the arrangements of other families. We can hardly move out of our doors but some one must ask, either us or our neighbours, whither we went. 3. The sources of his expected information. "And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant" (ver. 14). The uncle no doubt thought that if he could not obtain the required information from Saul, that he would have little difficulty in getting it from the servant. Servants are not always the most trustworthy persons, and especially with news at all exciting, or of family interest. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS TREATED. Some men have not sufficient power of character to contend with inquisitive people; and the artful inquirer, without raising the slightest suspicion, gains all the information required. It requires some little art to deal successfully with such folk; and of this Saul was happily possessed. 1. Saul's reply was truthful. "He told us plainly that the asses were found" (ver. 16.) We can never be justified in telling lies, not even to silence inquisitive men. Saul recognised this fact; and while speaking the truth, withheld part of the tidings. 2. Saul's reply was discreet. "But of the matter of the kingdom whereof Samuel spake, he told him not." 3. Saul's reply was modest. If such promotion had come to most young men, they would have hurried to their friends, and in a fit of excitement have communicated the whole story. But not so with Saul, he kept it in his own heart until God should read it to an assembled nation. 4. Saul's reply was short. He did not betray himself by a multitude of words; he did not by some unthinking sentence excite the suspicion of his uncle; but briefly told him about the asses. Here Saul displayed his common sense. Lessons:—1. Never tell people all they wish to know. 2. Do not abuse the sanctity of family relationships by petty intrusions. 3. That discretion is the only safety of a promoted life. (*Joseph S. Ezell, M.A.*) *Reticence, not indifference*:—Saul preserves a remarkable reticence on all that has transpired. He first meets his uncle, who enquires how and whither he has fared. 1. Saul gives him half an answer. He tells him about the asses, but says nothing of the anointing, or of the great spiritual change that had passed upon himself. 1. It is a lesson, first of all, in the inaccessibility of human soul to soul. How little way Saul's uncle saw into the depths of his real consciousness. He was talking about asses, but he was thinking about sovereignty. How much we are hidden from one another! Each man's heart is a walled enclosure. I am an unscalable fortress, an insoluble enigma to you until I choose to disclose myself, and you to me. This mutual inaccessibility is sometimes almost maddening. The desire to cross the threshold of another's consciousness and see life from his standpoint is, at times, a passion. There are occasions when we are tormented by the wish to know how another feels, or how we look in that other's eyes. But we might as well wish to exchange souls with an inhabitant of Mars or Jupiter. Nothing in the universe is more impossible than such a transition, such a transfer. How solemn a thing is individuality! "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddeth not with its joys." Responsibility is measured by idiosyncrasy. The kingship was Saul's own secret. The weight of his destiny presses upon his own heart alone. In the meantime he cannot even tell it to another, though a kinsman. Yes, it is a solemn thing that, do what we will, we cannot step in between another and his destiny. Some would give worlds even to bear the hell that is another's for that other; but there is the inexorable law, the impassable gulf between one consciousness and another. I do not know anything in life harder to bear than that impatience of helplessness which we feel in the presence of another's sorrow or pain. We can look on at Gethsemane, but we cannot lighten the struggle. "Every man shall bear his own burden." And we feel only less impatience at this same limitation with reference to the happiness of others. We cannot cross the boundary of their Paradise any more than of their Golgotha. If, then, none can tamper with my individuality, and it is my grand instrument of service in the world, let me see to it that that individuality be of the noblest, a power to lift men up, an attraction to draw them to the highest. 2. But Saul's silence on this occasion affords also a lesson in prudential reserve. It was impolitic that it should be too freely canvassed. There are times when it is the mark of a Divine wisdom to hold our tongues, even upon matters of supreme moment. Silence is sometimes the duty as well as the policy of a leader. Even truth has been injured rather than furthered by its premature and inopportune disclosure. It is not every man's duty to tell to the first man he meets all he knows and all he thinks. It is not always wise for the political leader to show his hand.

The religious teacher has to judge when it is expedient to lift the veil from some larger outlook, when the fitting moment has come for replacing the old by the new. Christ would not reveal to the unfit. You cannot enlighten the world by flashes. The light must dawn, and shine more and more unto the perfect day. The time must be chosen for letting in the first ray. The development of truth may be hindered by precipitancy. "There is a time to speak and a time to be silent." Saul was wise to say nothing in the meantime about the kingdom, and thus gave one evidence at least of his fitness to become a king. The man who is to rule must be capable of reticence and reserve; able to manage his tongue. Self-mastery is the grand secret of lordship over others, and in nothing is that self-mastery more shown than in the conduct of the lips. 3. Again, this incident suggests a caution against mistaking reticence for indifference. The fact that a man is silent upon a subject may mean that he is indifferent to it, but it does not necessarily mean it. Indeed, the reverse is more true. Men are often reserved in proportion to the depth and intensity of their emotions. We have a fine illustration of this in Shakespeare's "King Lear," in the reticence of Cordelia's love for her father—a love which, because it was so deep, could not find tongue—while the unnatural daughters of the poor old king were voluble in their protestations of devotion. "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my throat." And yet how divine was her love! It does not follow that because a man does not speak, therefore he does not feel. Saul said nothing of the matter of the kingdom, but what else was absorbing his thoughts, think you, all the while? We do not prate of our deepest love to every passer-by. The things that are most sacred are often most secret with us. We do not speak of them, because words are so poor and weak. "The action of the soul," says Emerson, "is oftener in that which is felt and left unsaid than in that which is said in any conversation." . . . "The soul carries its choicest treasures with a kind of fastidious delicacy. The history which lies inside of the soul is a history which will never be read until it is read from God's book. The very soul of the soul has never been spoken or printed. It is inarticulate." There is a profound reluctance in many persons, which should excite a respect as profound, to talk about their religious experience. It is wickedly unjust to interpret this reluctance as showing indifference to religion. No person has a right to ask me to unbosom myself to any miscellaneous crowd. If he presumes to do so, I show my sense of his indelicacy by retreating within the innermost keep of the castle of my own personality, and letting down drawbridge and portcullis in the face of my persecutor. Zeal for God is a noble principle, but the world is not going to be saved by bad manners. Abraham Lincoln did not generally pass for a religious man. "His religion was too far in," it has been said, "too deep down, for many words." Talk may be religious without being about religion. One of the most religious things you can do is to talk sensibly on all subjects. The Apostle Paul was neither by nature nor by calling reticent on religious subjects, and yet even he kept his deepest spiritual experiences to himself. There are not always state reasons for silence on matters of the kingdom. And "for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." 4. Again, let this incident put us on our guard, not only against our misreading of our neighbours' spiritual condition, but in our mutual judgments in general. To any one listening to Saul's conversation, for the moment, how frivolous he would have seemed. But he was not that! The kingdom was uppermost in Paul's mind, though his speech was of other things. We wrong men in reading them from the surface only. There were those who read the divinest of all human natures superficially, and how egregiously were they mistaken! Here was a heart, the heart of the Son of Man, the depth of whose love, the passion of whose pity, was infinite. Here was a life, the very fundamental notes of which were enthusiasm and sacrifice. And yet His ignorant critics, unable to distinguish between the accidental and the essential, said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber!" It was for the ears of the inner circle that He reserved the story of His agony and His passion, His certainty of martyrdom, His forebodings of the Cross, and His fixed resolution, notwithstanding, to go on unflinching to the tragic end. But the world which did not hear these things, and for whose ears they were not fit, misinterpreted His superficial gaiety of manner, and winsomeness of disposition, as indicating a want of moral earnestness. Who of us may not be misjudged after that? (*J. Halsey.*) *The piety and the modesty of Saul in his introduction to royal dignity, etc.* :—1. His piety appeared (v. 13) no sooner were his prophetic raptures over, but he resorts to the

synagogue or place of Divine worship, with his fellow-prophets, both to praise God for His Divine call to such an high advancement, and to pray unto Him for His protection and direction therein, etc. 2. His modesty in his taciturnity and reservedness towards his uncle, who being there present, and observing this unexpected alteration in his nephew, made him the more inquisitive about his journey, suspecting something extraordinary had happened to him that had caused this strange change. Saul answers his uncle that Samuel told him the asses were found, but not a word of his finding a kingdom (vers. 14, 15, 16.) Josephus renders two very good reasons of Saul's silence in this business. (1.) Lest if his uncle had believed it, Saul had then been matter of envy to his superior, seeing the nephew preferred before him. (2.) If he had not believed it, then would he have jeered Saul for a proud, ambitious, and imperious fool. I add. (3.) Saul might be moved to silence in obedience to Samuel who had obliged him to secrecy (chap ix. 25, 26, 27.) (4.) This was Saul's humble modesty, as was that afterward of hiding himself behind the stuff, when chosen king (ver. 22.) (5.) And it was certainly Saul's prudence to be silent in such a case and on good ground, not to divulge it before the due time. (C. Ness.) *Keeping a secret*:—When Lord Wellington was commander of an army in India, a certain rich man offered him a hundred thousand pounds for some secret information on a very important question. Wellington looked thoughtful for a few minutes, as if he was weighing the temptation. But he was not. He was only considering the best way to answer his tempter. At length he said: "It appears that you can keep a secret, sir?" "Certainly," said the man, feeling sure that he had gained his point. "So can I!" rejoined Wellington. "Good morning, sir!" And the man went away with a crestfallen air. Thus Wellington was proof against corruption. He rejected a bribe of £100,000.

Vers. 17-25. And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh.—*The public recognition of incipient kingship*:—Long enough had Saul been in the Divine studio, and fashioned by heavenly forces, his nature comes forth in power to enter upon life's duty, and also to grapple with its difficulties. In this recognition of incipient kingship we have—I. A REJECTION OF THE DIVINE. The last embers of the old Jewish Theocracy are smouldering into extinction. The rejection of the Divine King:—1. It was public. "And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh" (ver. 17). 2. This rejection was ungrateful. "And ye have this day rejected your God, who Himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations" (ver. 19). Like the planets nearest the sun, filled with light, and cheered with heat; so these Israelites had been fixed in the moral heavens near to the Infinite Being, who had thrown upon them the light of His finite mind, and given to them the sympathy of His loving heart; and thus blessed they now openly reject His future help! What ingratitude for a nation who had so frequently been delivered from imminent peril, from national ruin, and even from slavery, thus to deny Him who had been its refuge! 3. This rejection was wilful. "And ye have this day rejected your God" (ver. 19). It was not a mere frantic impulse that had taken possession of the national heart; nor had the petty orations of a renegade politician aroused the people to a temporary revolution. It was a matter of fixed purpose. 4. This rejection was reprehensible. "Ye have this day rejected your God." 5. This rejection was tolerated. "Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands" (ver. 19). The Divine Being frequently permits nations to have their own way, to pursue their own plans; and thus throwing themselves out of the chart of Providence, they are soon loosed on the wild ocean, until they are wrecked upon the predicted reefs. II. A CORONATION OF THE HUMAN. 1. The method according to which Saul was chosen. "And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken" (vers. 20, 21). (1.) The tribes were universally presented. (2.) The tribes were minutely inspected. Of course Samuel knew who was to be the future king, but yet he went through the ceremony of selecting him. Why? (1.) To show that the prior discipline of life is private in its nature. The discipline of every life is simply a matter between God and the soul immediately concerned; no other presence has a right to intrude upon its sanctity. (2.) To complete the satisfaction of the people. Had this method of choice not been adopted, and had Saul been made king merely upon the grounds of his previous calling, the people would have suspected favouritism, and have rebelled against the decision. But now they cannot; all are placed on the same

level, and therefore equally possess a like chance for the new office. Here we see : (3.) That God does not despise the humbler circles of life. Saul was taken from the tribe of Benjamin. Many imagine that because they are poor they are despised by men, and also forgotten or neglected by God. But such is not the case. 2. Saul's modesty is worthy of observation. "And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff" (ver. 22). This shows the effectiveness of the Divine discipline through which Saul had passed, and proves that he was the fit man for the office of kingship. Few men would run from kingship. Its pageantry would suit their pride too well; its sceptre would meet their ambition, and its flattery would feed their weakness. But Saul looked more at its responsibility than at its emolument. Some men, when called to posts of authority, exhibit a mock modesty, and hide themselves behind the stuff of life, but they take care to get where there are plenty of holes through which they may be seen, lest their compeers should stop in the search. Saul's was genuine modesty, and modesty never loses anything by being real, for it is in such request that men pray for its discovery (ver. 22). 3. Saul's reception by the people. (1.) What recommended him to them? (2.) It was enthusiastic. No doubt there were many disappointed hearts, but the general cry was, God save the king. 4. The sacredness of national history (ver. 25). 5. The conduct of Samuel in this crisis. (1.) Judicious. (2.) Brave. Lessons :—(1.) That the Divine goodness is an argument for human obedience. (2.) That good men have frequently to do things contrary to their wishes. (3.) That occasionally good men must yield, in the Providence of God, to the desires of wicked people. (4.) That when good men yield to the requests of disobedient foes, they must proclaim the future consequences. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Saul chosen king* :—When first the desire to have a king came to a height with the people, they had the grace to go to Samuel, and endeavour to arrange the matter through him. But it was a good thing that they came to Samuel at all. They were not prepared to carry out their wishes by lawless violence; they were not desirous to make use of the usual Oriental methods of revolution—massacre and riot. Samuel convenes the heads of the various tribes to a meeting, which was not to be counted a rough political convention, but a solemn religious gathering in the very presence of the Lord. But before the lot was actually cast, Samuel addressed to the assembly one of those stern, terrible exposures of the spirit that had led to the transaction. How could the people, we may well ask, get over this? How could they prefer an earthly king to a heavenly? 1. Perhaps we may wonder less at the behaviour of the Israelites on this occasion if we bear in mind how often the same offence is committed, and with how little thought and consideration, at the present day. To begin with, take the case—and it is a very common one—of those who have been dedicated to God in baptism, but who cast their baptismal covenant to the winds. The time comes when the provisional dedication to the Lord should be followed up by an actual and hearty consecration of themselves. Failing that, what can be said of them but that they reject God as their King? Then there are those who reject God in a more outrageous form. There are those who plunge boldly into the stream of sin, or into the stream of worldly enjoyment, determined to lead a life of pleasure, let the consequences be what they may. As to religion, it is nothing to them, except a subject of ridicule on the part of those who affect it. Morality—well, if it fall within the fashion of the world, it must be respected; otherwise let it go to the winds. God, heaven, hell—they are mere bugbears to frighten the timid and superstitious. Not only is God rejected, but He is defied. But there is still another class against whom the charge of rejecting God may be made. Not, indeed, in the same sense or to the same degree, but with one element of guilt which does not attach to the others, inasmuch as they have known what it is to have God for their King. I advert to certain Christian men and women who in their early days were marked by much earnestness of spirit, but having risen in the world, have fallen back from their first attainments, and have more or less accepted the world's law. What glamour has passed over their souls to obliterate the surpassing glory of Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God? What evil spell has robbed the Cross of its holy influence, and made them so indifferent to the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them? 2. But let us come back to the election. No doubt Saul had anticipated this consummation. He had had too many supernatural evidences to the same effect to have any lingering doubt what would be the result of the lot. Gregory Nazianzen actually fled to the wilderness after his ordination, and Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, in the civil office which he

held, tried to turn the people from their choice even by acts of cruelty and severity, after they had called on him to become their bishop. But, besides the natural shrinking of Saul from so responsible an office, we may believe that he was not unmoved by the solemn representation of Samuel that in their determination to have a human king the people had been guilty of rejecting God. This may have been the first time that that view of the matter seriously impressed itself on his mind. Even though his mind was not a spiritual mind, there was something frightful in the very idea of a man stepping, so to speak, into God's place. No wonder, then, he hid himself! 3. Three incidents are recorded towards the end of the chapter as throwing light on the great event of the day. (1.) "Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord." This was another means taken by the faithful prophet to secure that this new step should if possible be for good, and not for evil. It was a new protest against assimilating the kingdom of Israel to the other kingdoms around. No! although Jehovah was no longer King in the sense in which He had been, His covenant and His law were still binding, and must be observed in Israel to their remotest generation. (2.) The next circumstance mentioned in the history is that when the people dispersed, and when Saul returned to his home at Gibeah, "there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched." They were induced to form a body-guard for the new king, and they did so under no physical constraint from him or anyone else, but because they were moved to do it from sympathy, from the desire to help him and be of service to him in the new position to which he had been raised. Here was a remarkable encouragement. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Could there have been any time when Saul was more in need of friends? Congregations ought to feel that it cannot be right to leave all the work to their minister. What kind of battle would it be if all the fighting were left to the officer in command? The glory of the primitive Church of Rome was that it abounded in men and women whose hearts God had touched, and who "laboured much in the Lord." (3.) The last thing to be noticed is the difference of feeling toward Saul among the people. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Saul chosen king*:—The Jewish people lived under several different forms of government. At first they were under the primitive patriarchal form. After this came the theocratic government of the wilderness. This merged into the government by judges and became at times little better than anarchy. Then came the kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon, followed by the divided monarchy under Rehoboam and Jeroboam and their successors. After this came the exile, and, after the restoration, a government with limited powers under control first of Persia, then of Greece, Egypt, and Syria, and finally, after a period of independence under the Maccabees, under the Roman government. Each of these forms of government gave some form or colour to the theology of the nation, but none so deeply and permanently affected it as the monarchy. Figures borrowed from it were prominent in the preaching of Christ and of the apostles; and the Christian Church looks and prays for the coming of the kingdom of which this was a type. I. We are interested in noticing THE PROPOSED KINGDOM AS IT AFFECTED SAMUEL. The step was a great disappointment to him and also a personal insult. Much of his life work seemed to him wasted unless the form of government under which he had brought the land to prosperity continued. Many a faithful minister well past "the dead line of fifty," but with heart full of the Spirit of Christ, has the same mingling of righteous and personal sorrow when the congregation, "to please the young people," begin suggesting that a younger man could do better the work of the church. There was another personal sorrow to Samuel in the choice. The people in their demand for a king had told him in the bluntest possible manner of the unfitness of his own sons to be their leaders, and he was forced to acknowledge publicly the sad truth which his aching heart was reluctant to admit even to himself (I. Sam. 8, 5). II. WE ARE MUCH INSTRUCTED BY THE FACT THAT GOD DID NOT IMMEDIATELY DESERT THE PEOPLE AFTER THEIR WRONG CHOICE. Good men sometimes feel constrained thus to act; but if God had withheld help from all religious and political enterprises which fell below absolute righteousness, the world would have been in perdition long ago. A Christian is sometimes at a loss to know how far his coöperation with what seems to him the best policy possible to succeed, but which still falls below his ideal, makes him responsible for the defects of the policy or system. There are many excellent people who fail to coöperate with others for the reason that their plans seem in part a concession to evil that for the present cannot be cured. The question whether a Christian may hold stock in a railroad,

on the whole righteously managed but with some wrong features of administration; the question whether a Christian may visit the World's Fair if it open on Sunday; the question whether a Christian may patronise a hotel having a bar—these and many others sometimes puzzle good people. Paul was able to discriminate carefully and to determine whether eating meats offered to idols would involve a seeming endorsement of idolatry. In like manner must we discriminate between systems fundamentally evil and systems in which, though having features that are wrong, the evil is incidental. Perhaps there is not in the Old Testament an incident more clearly illustrative of God's attitude towards such systems than is afforded by this lesson. III. WE ARE INTERESTED IN THE LIGHT WHICH THIS LESSON THROWS UPON THE BETTER NATURE OF SAUL. Well may the words of Samuel have made the young leader tremble for his own future in the position which he must occupy. In this day young men are called out as never before into responsible positions. Because of this fact they are coming to expect it and perhaps to seek it. This is natural, but usually not necessary. The right man is not likely to be so hidden in the stuff but that he can be found for the place which God has anointed him to fill. The man with his back to the sunrise, when the king was to be chosen, first saw it as it lit up the western hill-tops. The best way for the young man who feels himself fitted for a higher place than he now occupies is to make himself so conspicuously useful where he is that when the people begin searching among the stuff they will find him head and shoulders above his companions. The hiding of good men grows increasingly difficult. The member of the House of Commons who sneered at an opponent "You blacked my father's boots!" received an answer that well may have been given with honest pride: "Yes, and did it well." Far from disqualifying him, the humble work may have added important qualifications for the higher service. Now, Saul is warm-hearted and dignified and sincere. No wonder the people admire him, for the words of Samuel are true and there is none like him whom the Lord hath chosen among all the people. IV. It is interesting to notice in the closing verses an illustration of the familiar truth THAT A GOOD THING WRONGLY OBTAINED DOES NOT SATISFY. The people have had their own way, and God has helped them to secure just what they had been demanding. When they saw him, they shouted their approval of his selection. But "the children of Belial," or the worthless ones who undoubtedly had been foremost in demanding a king, despised him. It is ever so. No man more heartily condemns sin than the sinner who commits it. At the last all sin bites like a serpent. But before this the stolen fruit is found less sweet than the sinner anticipated, and the self-loathing because of it makes it bitter to our taste. The lesson that most forcibly recurs to us is that which appears again and again in our study of the history of the Jewish people—God's faithfulness even to the unfaithful, His changelessness even to those who were constantly changing and so often for the worse, His goodness even to the undeserving. He is kind to the unthankful. (*William E. Barton.*) *Saul chosen king*:—The interest of the scene at Mizpeh concentrates in the representative of the old regime and the new, the venerable judge and the young king. In the example of each we may find instruction. I. The conduct of Samuel at Mizpeh sets before us THE WISDOM OF TIMELY CONCESSION. The change was inevitable. No personal influence could prevent or long hinder it. The wisdom of Samuel in his mediation between the old system and the new is now apparent. Of such men as Samuel, Dean Stanley has said, they "are the silent healers who bind up the wounds of their age in spite of itself; they are the good physicians who knit together the dislocated bones of a disjointed time; they are the reconcilers who turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, or of the fathers to the children." II. The example of Samuel further illustrates THE NOBILITY OF SELF-RENUNCIATION. He was called to depose himself and to invest another with his authority. How the story of his own life came up before him as he pondered the change! Yet above all these natural feelings Samuel rose victorious. Chagrin, if he felt it, was quickly overcome. Personal humiliation was lost in the desire to save Israel from the full consequences of her sin. A noble freedom from jealousy, like that of John the Baptist when he looked upon his successor, and like that of Paul in view of his rivals at Philippi, but the like of which the world has not often seen, now marked his course. Hitherto he had been a wise ruler, a sagacious and righteous judge, but not more famous than other judges. By self-renunciation he now became great. III. The career of Samuel suggests to us THE STRENGTH WHICH COMES FROM CONSCIOUS OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD. It was known to him that, in yielding to the people

and anointing a king, he was doing God's will. His obedient spirit led him to look upon the change in its relation to God's purposes, and not as affecting his own interests. The cause which had failed was God's cause. In taking sides with God in this matter, he was assured that he was not suffering final defeat. To find one's self wholly opposed to prevailing currents of thought and feeling is to become helpless and despondent, except as the soul rests upon the clear revelation of the will of God. Such a revelation had come to Samuel. Obedience is a lofty virtue. The best fruit to be gathered from the study of the life of Samuel is this: that constant and consistent obedience to the will of God is an unfailing source of strength and stability. Laying aside all thought of the long darkening tragedy of Saul's later life, we may study the scene at Mizpeh as it presents him to us. We note: 1. His humility. 2. His self-control. The young manhood of King Saul wins our hearts. But its brightness and beauty was of short duration. The sun arose in unveiled splendour, but long ere midday was lost in gathering, darkening clouds. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Saul chosen king:*—We shall best bring out the significance of this lesson, as part of the great revolution which established monarchy in Israel, by considering separately the respective parts in it of God, Samuel, and Saul. 1. One great purpose shaping the details of the story is to make clear and emphatic that Saul was chosen by God. Now this fact that God chose Saul is full of instruction, when taken in conjunction with two things—Israel's sin in desiring a king, and Saul's swift decadence and ultimate fall. But God permitted this sinful wish to have its way. Is that difficult to understand? Is it not in accord with His constant dealings? If we will not walk in His ways, He often leaves us to our own. He grants us the things that we whimper for, though our crying shows that we have shaken off His rule, and lets experience teach us the lessons of our folly. Wishes are often best cured by being fulfilled. Saul soon proved unworthy. The man chosen by God was a failure. Was, then, the choice a mistake? No. What he was chosen to do, he did. He saved Israel "out of the hand of the Philistines." God chooses men for tasks, and is ready to fit them for their work, but He does not magically preserve them from the temptation of their positions, unless they keep themselves in touch with Him; and if they reject His help, and are made worse by their exaltation, it is not God who has erred in His choice, but men who have fallen beneath their vocation by their own sin. 2. Samuel's part in the transaction is clearly marked. Only a man of ripened wisdom, and, still more necessary, of manifest disinterestedness, could have presided over so far-reaching a change. But a heart that keeps near to God is fitted for delicate duties, and a leader who evidently has no personal ends can sway men almost as he will. Well is it for nations and churches when the representatives of the old order are willing to pour the anointing oil on the young head of the embodiment of the new, and to give the stalwart warrior the benediction of a kiss from aged lips. 3. Saul's part in this incident brings into view chiefly two points, both of them excellences. The lesson for all, especially for the young, is, do the small duties of to-day, and be sure that doing them is the best preparation for wider spheres, and that when you are ready for these, they will be accessible to you. The reward of work is more work. Little tasks may be great if done from great motives; and, if we fill the corner where we are with light, we shall sooner or later be set on a candlestick high enough for the light that is in us. Simplicity and modesty marked the young Saul. He feels himself unworthy of the great destiny dimly marked out for him (ver. 21). Such a temper becomes untried youth, though its opposite is often a characteristic of early life. It usually takes a good many hard knocks to beat youthful self-conceit out of a man. It is time enough to boast when we are putting off the armour, and few of us have much inclination to do so then. But when we are putting it on, and have made no proof of our prowess, the less we brag or think of ourselves the better. It will do us no harm to remember the wise saying of a Cambridge don, "Gentlemen, none of us, not even the youngest, is infallible." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. He hath hid himself amongst the stuff.—*Responsibility:*—When Auxentius, the Arian Bishop of Milan, had expired, there was much excitement among the Christians in that City. Both Catholics and Arians had assembled in the principal church for the purpose of electing a new bishop, and each party was eager that some priest who held the same views as itself should be appointed to the vacant see. When the words of the governor had ceased to reverberate through the lofty arches of the church, the clear voice of a little

child broke the silence which succeeded, repeating the words "Ambrose Bishop—Ambrose Bishop." At once the cry was caught up by that vast assemblage. In vain did Ambrose protest that he was only a Catechumen, that he had not even been baptised; in vain did he urge that the sacred office of a bishop was one utterly foreign to his previous thoughts and studies (for he had been educated as a lawyer); the people would take no denial; and so, at last, he fled from their presence, in order to escape consecration to the Bishopric of Milan. This is no solitary instance. We read in the history of the Christian Church of many similar shrinkings from responsibility on the part of those who were elected to high office in that church; of many who, when called to assume the care of some diocese, or even the sacred office of the priesthood, endeavoured, like Saul the Benjamite, to go and hide themselves among the stuff. Now what was the cause of this strange behaviour: what was the cause of that flight of S. Ambrose, when elected to the Bishopric of Milan? Was it not a sort of nervous fear: was it not what may be called shamefacedness, or as it is better rendered in the revised version of the New Testament "shamefastness"? We can see countless instances of its disastrous effects in the Christian Church of the present day. But let us not be too ready to condemn our timid brethren. S. Ambrose became a mighty pillar of the Church: Saul, for many years, made an excellent king, and proved himself a courageous warrior after he had been drawn forth from his inglorious retreat. It is a hard thing to lead a holy life in a world given to unrighteousness. Our Lord told His disciples that the world would hate them and persecute them, just as it had hated and persecuted Him. It is the public declaration of our loyalty to Christ which forms the difficulty with most of us. And so this shamefastness leads men to live two lives—one in the Church and one in the family circle: another in the office or in the club. If we investigate the causes of this lack of helpers, what do we find? We find hundreds of young men and women attending our churches: many of them regular communicants—all at least making some outward profession of Christianity—all at least hoping to be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You implore them to labour in some one of those many fields which lie fallow for want of a sower, and they respond but too frequently with that parrot-cry that "charity begins at home." They are asked to join some society, to teach in some Sunday School; the call of God comes to them in a hundred different ways to come forth boldly and testify in His name; but, alas, when they are thus summoned, they flee like Saul the son of Kish, and hide themselves among the stuff and baggage of such excuses as they can drag together to conceal their lack of courage. We read day after day in the public journals, that, as each regiment embarks for service at the seat of war, not a man is found wanting when the muster-roll is called—none of the soldiers of our Queen are evading the call of duty—none are hiding themselves among the stuff. And shall we, the soldiers of Christ, suffer such a reproach to be cast at us, shall we suffer it to be said that our Christianity is pure selfishness, that all we care for is to save our souls; and that we care not to come forward and make public avowal, to take up this or that public duty which Christ calls upon us to perform for the love which we profess to bear Him? (*Patrick Wilson.*) *Among the stuff*:—For the fulfilment of high offices in Church and State men need the fellowship of those whose experience will impart a new impulse to life as well as a new education. 1. Men hide themselves among feeling arising from a sense of unworthiness. Such a sentiment must be cherished, but not elevated above the call of God. We have a large number of good people who withhold their persons and their influence from the Church of Christ, because they are unfit. Poor stuff! Come to your own coronation, God is calling. Your first fitness is obedience to the call. Be ruled by a sense of the greatness of the Saviour. 2. Men hide themselves among their good intentions. Intentions are good when they are followed by actions, but they are bad when they are mere substitutes. Some lives are made up of intentions, and, like castles in the air, they are blown down by the rough winds of circumstances. Many would be rich without work, wise without learning, and famous without a passport. Very many people sincerely hope to become serious and religious some day. 3. Men hide themselves among their doubts and unbeliefs. Those who set themselves up as harmonisers of the Divine method and fail are not a few. No vessel anchors in the fogs on the Banks of Newfoundland, but every one drives through. To live in doubt is to anchor in a fog. Every one knows something of the perplexities of belief. The unrest of

the soul calls for the rest of faith; but he who rests in the unrest of doubt is condemned already. 4. Men hide themselves among worldly cares and anxieties. The motto of many is, "Business must be attended to." Certainly, and religion must be attended to likewise. 5. Men hide themselves among the pleasures of life. The pleasure-seeker is everywhere, and is catered for most extensively, but it is poor stuff. (*T. Davies.*) *We should not shrink from the path of duty*:—Joan of Arc is a striking example of strong resolve and lofty purpose conquering a naturally timid disposition. When convinced that she was called of God to deliver France from English rule, the timid village maiden became a leader in battle-fields and sieges, and unawed by the presence of the highest personages in the land. The conviction of her mission made her strong.

Ver. 24. **There is none like him among the people.**—*The choice young man and goodly*:—There are two forms in which the man who is steering his vessel over the perilous ocean may ascertain the course which he should keep, and receive admonition of the dangers which he should avoid. There may be the well-known sea-mark, reared near the treacherous rocks, speaking its language of caution, and yet at the same time affording its tranquillising assurance, that so long as that caution is followed, there will be safety. But there is another beacon which the sailor sometimes discovers, whose warnings are conveyed in a still more emphatic form. It is not the light-house which the hand of science, directed by kindness, has reared—it is not the buoy that floats over the treacherous sand; but it is the shattered vessel which has come too near the point of danger—its timbers breaking, its stores floating, its passengers lost. Now, what these two forms of admonition are to those who "go down upon the deep and do business in the great waters," the precepts of God's holy word on the one hand, and its historic warnings on the other, are to those who are voyaging over life's ocean to the haven of eternity. The language of God's precepts is kindly admonitory: these say enough to keep us right; but we are apt to get so used to their teachings, as that they lose their power—used to them, as the sailor is to the beacon on the rock, or to the buoy floating over the sand. We want something more. We want something that shall tell upon our security and heedlessness more vividly, and with more realised impression; and we have it, we find it in the historic warnings of God's word—in wrecks—the wreck of peace—the wreck of character—the wreck of comfort—the wreck of hope—in the cases of those who have trifled with the voice of Divine precepts, and have refused the blessings of heavenly direction. Such is the spectacle which is presented to us in the history before us—it is a wreck, and one of no ordinarily distressing character. But among the spectators of a vessel driven on the rocks, and dashed to pieces by the violence of the surge, none would be so much moved as those to whom it might have occurred to see that very barque when it was launched. To spectators who could recur to past hopes thus excited, the effect of beholding the wreck would be additionally distressing; the contrast between what had been, and what was then before the eye would be telling in the extreme. And this enhancement of melancholy interest undoubtedly attaches to our present theme. Nothing could be more auspicious, nothing more attractive, than the commencement of that career which terminates in a moral wreck. There were actual manifestations of conduct on his part which looked like promise of the brightest future. We particularise two. I. **THE FIRST WAS HIS DUTIFULNESS AS A SON, AND THE CONSEQUENT REGARD IN WHICH HIS FATHER HELD HIM.** In these respects, he really stands before the young as an example and a model. The Spirit of God, who has recorded the perversity of Eli's sons, and the unworthiness of Samuel's sons, has brought into notice the immediate and ready obedience of the son of Kish (*chap. ix. 3, 4*). We are not surprised to find, as another part of this interesting history, the regard which Saul's father entertained for him, as evinced in the incident, recorded *chap. x. 2*, that when Saul and his servant were departed from Samuel, and had reached Rachel's sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin, at Zelzah, two men met them, who having announced that the lost property was found, added (and with what naturalness and simplicity does the addition fall upon our ears), "Lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?" The loss of his property was considerable; but the loss of his son was a far greater privation—"A wise son maketh a glad father;" and now that the father missed the son who had often made him glad, he could not

help exclaiming, in his deep solicitude, "What shall I do?" Saul occupied at home a place of important interest in his parent's view, and now that his place was vacant the blank was painful. It is painful to see children outliving the esteem of their own parents. We cannot read the varied references which Scripture makes to the parental relationship, and not feel that the test which Saul applied in ascertaining the course of duty is one which God often and urgently demands that we should employ. "The joy of a father," or "the heaviness of a mother," are considerations of vast moment with God; and are, therefore, matters which cannot safely be trifled with by children, even of elder growth. "Will this rob my father of rest; will this add to my mother's sorrow?"—let this be the question before you take your course, and shape your plan and purpose. II. BESIDES THE PARTICULAR POINT WHICH WE HAVE REVIEWED THERE WAS IN SAUL'S CHARACTER A LARGE AMOUNT OF RIGHT-MINDEDNESS UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MIGHT HAVE PROVED A STRONG TEMPTATION TO MANIFESTATIONS OF AN OPPOSITE KIND. Sometimes we see, among our fellow-creatures, great excellences overborne by great and lamentable defects. We hear it said of a young man, "Yes, he is a good son; but when you have said that, you have said all. He is so conceited, so upstart, so perverse towards all but his own immediate friends, that you lose many a time the recollection of his excellence in the personal inconvenience which you suffer from the other features of his conduct." No such thoughts as these, however, are suggested by the narrative of Saul.

1. There would appear to have existed, in his case, what might have been a considerable temptation to personal vanity; and yet, in the earlier portion of the narrative, there cannot be traced the slightest approach to it in his demeanour. To be vain on the ground of personal charms is to act a senseless part, for these imply no merit, and promise no long duration. The winter of age must be contemplated, as well as the spring-tide of youth and the summer of manhood and womanhood. Besides, it is the mind that gives value to the man: and what is the casket if it be empty? However beautiful its exterior, it disappoints if there be no gem within.

2. If Saul's appearance did not lift him up, neither does he at first seem to have been rendered vain nor to have been unduly elated by his new circumstances. There is nothing more difficult to bear than a change from a lower position to one which is several grades above it. There are some beautiful instances, indeed, in which men have stood the trial well, and have carried into an elevated sphere all the humility and simplicity which marked them in the ordinary walks of life. But these are rather the exceptions than the rule. With many a man the very day of his transition to a higher path in outward condition has been the period from which is to be dated his pitiful absurdness—his perfect uselessness—his moral fall.

3. He manifested the same right-mindedness in bearing without restraint conduct which was intended to irritate him, and which was very much calculated to produce that effect. "The men of Belial said, How shall this man save us?" And they despised him, and brought him no presents" (chap. x. 27). And how did Saul act? With what significance the sacred writer adds, "But he held his peace." Now it was much to be so quiet where human nature—as we, perhaps, know from experience—is very apt to be excited. But the secret of this silence is to be found in that characteristic which we have just been considering. If he had attached an overweening importance to himself, you would have seen a very different course of conduct. But it was the absence of this which saved him. Such are the representations afforded by Scripture of the character of Saul at the time at which he was called to the throne. And from all we have said, what might not have been hoped for in regard to the future? Yet our hopes are destined to be disappointed. Be all that Saul was when he set out in life, but secure the same endowments of character from a higher source than mere nature. Seek them from God, as the result of His Spirit's teaching—His Spirit's operation in the heart. This will be the great security against that disappointment which arises from such a deterioration of character as a little later we have before us in the history of Saul. (*J. A. Miller.*) *A royal mien*:—James I. of England was joyfully acclaimed king on Elizabeth's death, and began his royal procession from Scotland to his new capital in great state. The nation, was bitterly disappointed, however, to find him mean-looking and ungainly, whilst his manner was common, uncouth, and utterly wanting in personal dignity. So weak and cowardly was he that the sight of a drawn sword made him shudder. A severer contrast between King James I. and Saul

it would be hard to conceive, and the different impressions produced upon their people were quite in keeping with the diverse characters of the two men. **And all the people shouted, and said, God save the King.**—*God save the king!*—Our text tells of the first time, in Scripture, that this great shout of loyalty was raised. Illustrating this old cry briefly from the circumstances noted in Samuel, and applying it to our own time, we may observe:—I. How God is TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE AND OF AUTHORITY. In this first prayer for royalty, there is the acknowledgment of God as the fountain of life and authority. This grand truth of religion is not forgotten in the original tongue of this verse, which expresses the people's wish, "Let the King live!" The same truth is implied in the form of words now usual, "God save the King!" Of such authority how often is the Almighty declared to be the author and the defender; and Jesus Christ Himself, the first-begotten of the dead, is declared to be the Prince of the kings of the earth. Let none of us forget that, because of such truth, the Coronation, at which the outward symbols of dominion are entrusted to the monarch, is a distinctively religious service; far more so than anything else. Thus it was in those old times to which our text refers; so it has been ever since; and so it is still throughout Christian countries, even throughout heathen countries, with a few exceptions, all down through the ages.

II. PRAYER FOR THE KING:—The Almighty is to be acknowledged: the King is to be prayed for; why and how? In the light especially of his high position and of his vast responsibility. While for rulers in general we are to intercede, for our own King there are many special causes for so doing with sacred enthusiasm. On the occasion of our text, the people shouted with ardour unrestrained. In some ways, perhaps, our civilisation is more subdued, and sometimes, perhaps, restrains too much the utterance of natural affection. Although in the present instance so far chastened, let not our loyal feelings be too much repressed. Let them not be shut up as in an icehouse, but rather be expanded with something of that summer heat, which we love and long for. Finally, in our loyalty thus honouring the King, we shall in piety be fearing God who hath given us this command. (G. G. Gillan, D.D.) *The King*:—It does not need a great deal of historical acumen to see that the Coronation of King Edward VII. of England will stand out even in our remarkable national history as an event of peculiar and pathetic importance. We have been accused by a friendly, if somewhat cynical, critic of applying to ourselves as a nation all the promises of favour and the dignity of responsibility which God bestowed on His chosen people, the Jews, in the days of their faithfulness and trial. It would be strange if we had reaped no benefit from our national study of and veneration for the Bible. What then does the person of the King represent to us, clothed with all the insignia and majesty of supreme glory. I. THE KING IS THE REPRESENTATIVE AND EMBODIMENT OF CERTAIN PERSONAL AND IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES, AND AMONG THESE WE RECKON FIRST IN THE PERSON OF THE KING THE MAJESTY AND DIGNITY OF LAW. He is the fountain of a nation's law, the supreme embodiment of its liberty and privileges based on law. In looking back over our chequered history we see the fierce nature of the conflict which has raged round this conception of the regal office. Our King does not reign as a despot in defiance of his people's rights, but as the living embodiment of all that they most venerate and cling to. As children we were accustomed to read history with an eye to the stirring events of the battlefields, and the struggles of kings and people in all the moving incidents of the public tragedies which surround a nation's growth, and as we get older we shall find that these struggles lose none of their interest. They gain in importance, as the conflict of liberty with oppression, of order with disorder, now on this side, now on that. We mark in them the gradual evolution of a clearer idea of what is meant by a monarch, in his supreme character as the guardian and fountain of law; we see the diminution by slow degrees of the idea of personal irresponsible power, and the quenching of the lust of greed and oppression, and the emerging of the figure of dignity and religion, under which a nation venerates the figure of her liberty. Have we learned yet all the beauty and grandeur which lie expressed in that sacred name—law? When the old Greeks looked out on this magnificent universe in which all things perform their ordered functions, they called the world by a name which signified order, as if that were the main and pervading characteristic which was stamped upon its Divine mechanism. The reign of law, of perfect, unswerving law, excited their veneration and awe; and

it was magnificent, it was Divine. And so we are accustomed still in most intimate and hidden ways to trace the action of the Holy Spirit in the regions of order and discipline within the soul. The Spirit of God which once moved upon the face of the waters when order emerged from chaos still rules over the hearts and lives of those who give themselves up to His gentle guidance. While we honour this great principle of law and order in the person of our King, whom we crown and consecrate, let us see to it that we honour every manifestation of it in our own lives. It is a sorry thing to contend for the liberty of the subject, and maintain the long conflict for the integrity of our laws, if at the same time we are living the life of slaves, in a voluntary subjection to the tyranny of evil. The struggles of the nation for freedom and for liberty are paralleled in the life of many a man to-day, with a very diverse issue of the conflict. The supremacy of law, within the circle of his own life, is the inherent birthright of every man. We are born free, but the issue of life's struggle too often leaves us slaves. Let us at least venerate the fount of law, as those who know the blessings of law in our inmost selves. It is a turbulent kingdom which God has called upon you to rule. There are fierce passions which were designed to serve under your kingship, which are only too ready to rise in rebellion and oust the ruler from his throne. Not many hundred yards from this cathedral there once existed that strange region known as Alsatia, with which the pen of the novelist and the brilliant pages of Macaulay have made us familiar, that region in which the king's writ did not run, the abode of criminal disorder and vice. So many a man has elevated his besetting sins into an Alsatia, an abode of privileged misdeeds, where the will gives no order, and the law of God makes no appeal. I appeal for a larger and more whole-hearted veneration for law and order within the kingdom of our own lives. Let us have no Alsatias, no privileged sins, no times, no places, or moods which are outside the beneficent rule of law. Let us bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. II. THE KING, ONCE MORE IS THE REPRESENTATIVE TO US OF OUR NATIONAL TRADITIONS. The history of the nation hangs round it like a necklace, studded with glorious jewels, which represent the traditions which have been worked out of its long and chequered careers. There are memories of struggles at home and abroad, of some of which we are ashamed, of most of which we are proud. We remember how, in the very place where we are standing, the expiring struggle of heathenism, the advancing powers of Christianity, the bitterness of religious and civil strife have all left their mark on history. Nelson and Wellington lie buried in our crypt, to remind us of the European struggle which made such an impression on our national sentiment, and showed England the great destiny she was called upon to fulfil. And we thank God that while seldom free from some form of war in some part of our vast Empire, God has mercifully shielded us from the horrors of war in our own island. The battle of Sedgemoor, in Somerset, fought in the rebellion of Monmouth in the days of James II., is generally regarded as the last serious battle fought in our own land; for which we may, indeed, thank God, when we see what war means—as, for instance, to the sunny plains of France in the awful struggle of 1870, or in South Africa in the horrors and destruction of the war now happily and gloriously concluded. Through long centuries of struggle, of blessings received and warnings given, we do feel that there has emerged a great tradition which we are pledged to maintain, and of which our crowned king is the personal representative. We do not as a nation care much for glory; it is an evanescent and intoxicating sentiment which is foreign to our character. We seem, on the contrary, to be almost cynically indifferent to the hostile criticism of our national actions, which we are at the same time powerless to avert. But, thank God, there has emerged as the permanent tradition of our race, and as the prevailing symbolism of our national flag, the sense of duty. However we fail in its practical application, however imperfect may be our realisation of our responsibilities, still it is something to feel that it is the great tradition of our race, that England expects that every man should do his duty, and that greed and injustice, where and if they exist, exist only in defiance of our most cherished national traditions. Every man is better for a tradition in his life. The novelist has traced for us with merciless accuracy the career of a man who fell from bad to worse, largely because he had no tradition in his life; who never could remember the time when he was not indolent and self-pleasing; who had no battlefields of struggle, no records of victory to help him with the strength of a tradition, or the memories of outlived sorrow. And so he fell, as one who is alone when he

falls, and who has nothing to keep him up, or anything of which he should say, "God forbid that I should be false to my better self, or betray my nobler past." Under the name of principle we all of us recognise with an instinctive homage a tradition, which it is only honourable for a man to maintain. A temptation to a degraded sensuality loses half its malignity when it comes to a man, not as an isolated experience in a multifirm career, but as a blow aimed at a cherished principle of life and a uniform course of action. It is an immense strength for a man to be able to say to the enticer, "I never have yielded to that kind of temptation yet, and I am not going to begin now." It is an immense support to a life of integrity, to be able to meet the specious appeal to a supposed profit in dishonesty by an honest repudiation which can say, "I have never done a dishonest action yet, nor told a lie, and it would be contrary to all my principles to do so. One of the greatest national treasures is the glorious tradition which is the heritage of our race, and therefore once more, as the depository of that tradition, and as the upholder of its integrity, we say of him whose coronation we acclaim to-day, "God save the King." III. BUT WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT HUMAN NATURE BEING WHAT IT IS, AND OUR ENGLISH NATION BEING WHAT IT IS, THERE HAS GATHERED ROUND THE BEST TRADITION OF OUR LOYALTY A DEPTH OF PERSONAL FEELING FOR THE PERSON OF THE SOVEREIGN. Not officially only, but personally, out of respect and affection for the reigning monarch; where that has not been made impossible, we have loved to say, "God save the King." We, none of us, are likely to forget the great personal devotion which all classes of English men and English women displayed towards our late Queen. Her throne, if any, was reared up in the hearts of her people. Nor is this a merely sentimental affection. In crowning our King, we crown the majesty of law, we crown the greatness of our tradition, and the glory of our race, but we also crown one, who has mounted the steps of the throne, straight from the shaping tenderness of the loving hand of God. And, therefore, with all our hearts we say, "God save the King." (W. C. E. Newbolt, M.A.)

Vers. 25. And wrote it in a book.—*Value of a written constitution*:—A written revelation is an incomparable blessing. Is not the cry of subjects everywhere for a constitution, something written, the rights and duties of sovereign and subject in black and white? The Bible is to us like a written constitution; we can take it home, we can consult it when we please, quote from it, appeal to it. God graciously binds Himself by it. Of all the modern heresies, none is more contrary to human experience than the rejection of a written word, and the proposed substitution of human conscience and the moral sentiments as our guide. (N. Adams.)

Vers. 26, 27. And there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us.—*Public opinion in reference to the new King*:—I. THE SYMPATHY OF SAUL'S FRIENDS. There are times in the life of man when the sympathy of a friend is of priceless value. At critical junctures of our history, in times of sorrow or in seasons of joy, it is most acceptable. 1. This sympathy was human. "There went with him a band of men." Potent as are spiritual influences to sustain us in duty, is it not welcome to feel the pressure of the hand, to hear the love which speaks in the quivering voice, and to see the eye of compassion looking upon us? 2. This sympathy was collective. "A band of men." 3. This sympathy was practical. "They went with him." 4. This sympathy was fervent. "Whose hearts." They did not merely follow Saul as a body-guard of soldiers, who were to be paid for their work. There was some deep power within that bound them to the new King; and therefore we cannot wonder at their sympathy taking a practical form. 5. This sympathy was divinely called forth. "Whose hearts God had touched." Yes! all hearts are in the Divine hand, and when we are placed by Providence in circumstances of trial, it can influence the most potent so that they become our friends. II. THE ANTIPATHY OF SAUL'S ENEMIES. "But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents." 1. This antipathy was envious. "This man save us." They thought themselves far more worthy for the position of king than Saul; they considered his social rank beneath theirs, and his valour far inferior to their chivalry. Envy always makes

men blind. 2. This antipathy was sarcastic. "This man." 3. This antipathy was presumptuous. Why should they place themselves in opposition to such a potent and even holy authority. 4. The antipathy was unconcealed. III. THE SUGGESTIVE CONDUCT OF SAUL IN REFERENCE TO THE HATRED OF HIS ENEMIES. "But he held his peace." 1. His conduct was dignified. 2. His conduct was discreet. 3. His conduct was magnanimous. Lessons:—1. The considerateness of Divine Providence in giving us the aid of our companions in the trying circumstances of life. 2. That the efforts of national opinion are often misdirected. 3. That envy is often the secret of much political opposition. 4. That silence is the best method of treating such contemptible opposition. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Helpers and Hinderers*:—In one of his most perilous experiences, in the midst of a wild and savage mob, John Wesley was attended by four devoted followers, three men and a woman, who were fully prepared to die with their teacher and friend if God so willed. At the critical moment the leader of the mob turned to Mr. Wesley and said, "Sir, I will spend my life for you. Follow me, and none shall hurt a hair of your head." With two companions this man conducted the preacher to a place of safety. So, in our lowlier and commonplace walks of life and duty, we shall find both hinderers and helpers. *A God-touched band*:—Another king whose circumstances illustrated by Saul's—one Jesus. Look at Him. Israel refused. Why? Is not this the carpenter? etc. God touched the hearts of a few. He went forth and seeing Matthew said, "Follow me!" Peter, James and John. So now I ask you to look at:—I. CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE. 1. Foundation upon which His kingship rests. We are not referring to His Divine kingship solely. As God He is the King immortal, invisible, etc. But we are viewing Him as deity enshrined in humanity seated upon a throne. And the question naturally arises, what claim has He to be so seated? It rests upon His atoning work. Some crowns are now worn by earthly monarchs which have been won for them by the blood of others, but Christ's crown has been won by His own blood. 2. His kingdom, twofold; heaven where angels worship, earth where believers love and serve. 3. His government, righteous, holy in self, acts, benevolent. Merciful both in grace and providence. Even dark providence is mercy. 4. His conquests. The world to be converted. II. HIS FOLLOWERS. Many have the badge but not real. Text reminds us of:—1. Their former state. Their position is one of sympathetic affection, and contrasts with their former state which was like that of those who derided, disliked. 2. The change. One of affection. How accomplished? God touched them. Must be Divine power! 3. A "band" has one view, one feeling, one purpose. III. LEARN FROM THIS SUBJECT:—1. The fearful consequences to those who reject Christ. Elizabeth's frown killed Sir Christopher Hatton. What will it be to bear the lack of approval from Christ. 2. How to recruit Christ's band. Seek to convert the young. The Sabbath School is the place. There the ranks must be filled up. (*G. Rigby.*) *Hearts touched of God*:—Saul went home to Gibeah, but not alone, for "there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched." Perhaps this Divine touch involved much more than some of us may have supposed. The heart, in Holy Scripture, frequently means the whole spiritual nature, including the understanding, the affections, the conscience, and the will. Their understanding was touched, enabling them to discern their own duty and the true interest of Israel. Their affections were touched, powerfully attracting them to "him whom the Lord had appointed to be captain of their inheritance," and inspiring them with due respect and confidence. Their conscience was touched, compelling them to acknowledge the Divine hand in the whole matter, and their own obligation to acquiesce in the appointment of the Most High, and to sustain with all their force the man who had been set over them. Their will was touched, re-enforcing with Divine grace their purpose practically to carry out the resolution they had formed; so that, whatever others might do, they would adhere to the king, and go with him to Gibeah, ready to protect his person, support his prerogatives, avenge all insults offered to him, and serve him in any emergency that might arise, in any capacity that might be required. True, there was much in Saul to attract. All this had its effect in winning their love and confidence; yet there was also a manifest supernatural power working within them. And still, by His Holy Spirit, through His gospel, His sacraments, and His providences, God graciously touches the hearts of men. Without this Divine agency, none would ever be saved. True, there are means and ministries employed, but these without God were fruitless and inefficient.

This Divine touch—what is its nature? and what are its effects? 1. It is the touch of a light that illumines. Here begins all true conversion. It may be as the morning dawn, shining more and more unto the perfect day; or as the lightning flash, smiting the sinner blind till some Ananias comes to open his eyes; but in either case, it is God that toucheth the heart with the living light of His grace. 2. It is the touch of an owner that claims. As a man lays his hand upon his lost or stolen property, saying, "This is mine;" so God lays His hand upon the human heart, alienated from Him by sin, and demands it as His own. It has been captured and kept from Him, but He will not relinquish His claim. 3. It is the touch of a weapon that wounds. The heart is in rebellion, and must be conquered. The two-edged sword of the Spirit must pierce and cleave it, before it can be cleansed and cured. 4. It is the touch of a hammer that breaks. Edward the First was called "the Hammer of the Scots." God saith, by His prophet—"Is not my word a hammer, that breaketh the flinty rock in pieces?" What is that flinty rock, but the obdurate heart of His people, hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, harder than adamant, or the nether millstone? Oh! the flinty heart, that cannot feel, and will not relent! What hope can we have of its improvement? God has graciously smitten the stone, and turned it to flesh; and now He binds up the broken heart, and heals the contrite spirit. 5. It is the touch of a fire that dissolves. "God maketh my heart soft," saith Job, "and the Almighty troubleth me." How dreary is the Northern world in winter, the fountains frozen up, and the mountains wrapped in their robes of snow! But when the vernal sun shines forth in his strength, the fetters of ice are dissolved, the streams released flow through the valleys, and all nature puts on its gay and festive attire. Still greater is the change wrought in the heart by the Sun of righteousness. A rough and shapeless lump of gold is cast into the furnace, and soon it becomes a beautiful ornament, fit for the brow of a king. So the touch of God can melt the hardest heart, and change it into a crown-jewel for the King of kings. 6. It is the touch of a key that opens. Was it not the Lord that "opened the heart of Lydia to receive the things spoken of Paul?" The heart is closed against Him by sin and selfishness. 7. It is the touch of a spirit that quickens. "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." And dead in trespasses and sins are we all, till touched by the quickening Spirit of God. The affections are dead, the conscience is dead, and the will is dead; and none but He who breathed into the first human form the breath of life, can make man once more "a living soul"—"alive to God through our Lord Jesus Christ." 8. It is the touch of a Healer that restores. 9. It is the touch of a Fountain that cleanses. 10. It is the touch of a magnet that attracts. God is love, and the heart He touches must gravitate towards Him. When Elijah passed Elisha ploughing in the field, and threw his mantle over the ploughman's shoulders, the latter instantly left his oxen standing in the furrow, and hastened after the prophet, and never left him till a chariot of fire took him up from his side to heaven. So the touch of the Divine Galilean drew the fisherman from his nets and boats, the publican from the receipt of custom, etc. (*J. Cross, D.D.*) *A Godly band of men*:—Accommodating this statement, without perverting it, we are naturally led to describe the subjects of Christ under a two-fold aspect. I. **THEIR PERSONAL CHARACTER.** They are men whose hearts God has touched. 1. An internal change has passed upon them. Their heart has been touched. This is an observation which strikes at the root of a very common and destructive error. Born and educated amid all the decencies of a civilised and Christian community, many amongst us are insensibly moulded into the mere form and fashion of the age. This is particularly the case with the young. If the young, therefore, are to be ranked among the people of the living God, they must follow the Lord heartily. 2. The author of this internal change is God—their hearts are touched by Him. This statement also corrects another very serious mistake in regard to the production of a religious character. If there are multitudes that place religion in outward forms, while it springs from an inward change, so there are not a few who trust to human power for its production, and not to the power of God. It is the besetting sin of fallen man, and especially of the young who have not yet proved by failure the utter weakness of man to magnify their ability, and depreciate the agency of the Holy Spirit. They imagine they have power at any given point of their sinful career, to arrest their progress, repent, believe, and be saved. 3. The influence of this internal change is to make the subjects of

Christ cherish warm affection, and practice dutiful obedience towards their King. It was because the hearts of this band were touched by God, that they encircled Saul as their monarch Divinely chosen. And mingling religion with loyalty, gave their conscience to God, and their sword to their sovereign. In a similar manner, every heart renewed by the Holy Ghost loves, and honours, and obeys the King of Zion. II. Passing from the consideration of their personal character, let us next consider THE SUBJECTS OF CHRIST IN THEIR ASSOCIATED CONDITION. They are a band. This suggests three ideas—union, mutual affection, and joint co-operation. 1. They are united. A life of solitary seclusion is enjoined by no part of revelation. Monks and hermits were the produce of an ignorant and barbarous age. In opposition to this selfish and seclusive spirit there is something uniting and comprehensive about the spirit of the Gospel. The sacred writers delight to represent the followers of Jesus under the figurative emblems of a flock of sheep—of a family—of an army; all of which representations embody the idea of numbers, and of numbers united by the strongest and closest ties. 2. The subjects of Christ cherish towards each other mutual affection. The Church of Christ is united, and united by love. 3. The subjects of Christ co-operate together. Kings long ago, knew how to levy soldiers, train armies, subordinate immense masses of human being to military discipline, and bring them forward, in regular order, upon one point, for the sake of conquest. With the exception of the mad attempt of united Christendom to wrest from the Turks the holy sepulchre, we read of no combined enterprise, on the part of the Church, during hundreds of years, for the advancement of religion. Bible Societies and Missionary Institutions, combining simplicity of plan with nobleness of effort, are the inventions of a period comparatively late. Here, every one does a little, and all their efforts bear upon some great undertaking. (*Gavin Struthers.*)

Godly comrades:—With what glowing prospects does this new-crowned king begin his reign; chosen by God Himself; gifted with a splendid physical presence; filled with the spirit of God; accepted and supported by all the people, and especially surrounded by such a noble bodyguard. I. GOD, IN TOUCHING THE HEARTS OF THESE MEN, FILLED THEM: 1. With reverence for the cause of which he was representative. 2. With devotion to him as that representative. 3. With a commendable zeal in service to that cause. 4. With wisdom and ability as counsellors. 5. With personal unselfishness in their service. II. EVERY CHOSEN SERVANT OF GOD NEEDS TO-DAY AS A BODY-GUARD, "a band of men whose hearts God has touched." 1. With the seal of pardon and acceptance. 2. With a sanctified zeal in God's service. 3. With a burning desire for the salvation of souls. 4. With a mighty faith in God as to the results of the work. (*Homiletic Review.*) *God touching human hearts*:—It is interesting to observe that, although the people were so bent on having a king, they still were willing to have God decide who their king should be. They had not "waited patiently for the Lord," content with the administration of their national affairs which He had instituted until He should see fit to order a change; yet they did not wish to break wholly away from His control. They desired their king to be chosen by Him and kept under His guidance. They did not dare take their new departure without the counsel and benediction of Samuel, "the man of God." As a people, although faulty, they were still the sincere people of God, adhering still to the purpose which an earlier generation avowed to Joshua, "We will serve Jehovah," although so far from perfection of fidelity in that service. From that inauguration-scene "Saul went home to Gibeah"—went, no doubt, to serious and earnest thought and deliberation—and (how beautifully it is added!) "there went with him a band of men whose hearts God had touched." There is infinite poetry in that expression, in that thought—God touching a man, the invisible, spiritual God touching the hearts of men. The contact of material bodies, which that word primarily signifies, is a very simple and a very familiar fact. But in living bodies it suggests much more than that primary fact. It is connected with vivid sensation. To touch is to feel—to be touched is to be made to feel. And then with what facility do our minds pass from feeling as bodily sensation to feeling as mental emotion! The effect of a blow upon our flesh is expressed by the same word as the effect of a sorrow or a disappointment upon our souls; we feel it, it touches us. We are in no danger of misunderstanding the word touch when applied to God. When the afflicted patriarch of Uz exclaims, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me" (Job xix. 21), no one gets the idea of bodily

form or members as belonging to God—members which could be brought into contact with the bodies of men. It is only a vivid mode of expressing Job's devout belief that all which he suffered was sent on him by God. "He toucheth the hills and they smoke" (Ps. civ. 32), is the Psalmist's poetic utterance of his sentiment that the sublimest volcanic phenomena are easy products of almighty Divine agency. It is the parallel, in thought as in form, of the other phrase, "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth." When we read of our divine-human High Priest that He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. iv. 15), we readily understand Him to be capable of quick sympathy, feeling with us whatever painfully affects us. There were some disloyal, some "sons of Belial"—wild, reckless, unprincipled men—who did not hesitate to manifest their contempt for the new monarch. Over against these in the Scripture picture we see "a band of men whose hearts God had touched," whose behaviour showed that they were acting under a Divine influence—that their minds were decisively affected by Divine power. What was the behaviour which showed this? It is very simply related in the context. They "went with him." Were you ever in circumstances in which simply to go with you was the kindest and the bravest thing that any friend could do for you, including and pledging every other kind and generous and courageous thing which there might yet be occasion to do? Did you ever stand among an angry crowd tossing your name about with ribald scoffs and glaring on you with ferocious faces? Have you known the comfort in such a situation of having honourable citizens and reputable ladies come quietly to your side and show themselves determined to stand with you, and to take with you whatever insults or whatever injuries might come? How came they to have this generous disposition and this loyal spirit? They were "a band of men whose hearts God had touched." Does this dependence on God for such good influence remove from men all responsibility for the state of their minds? To affirm this or to think this would imply an utter misapprehension of the character of that Divine influence and its relations to human activity, human responsibility and human character. The influence which He exerted in touching their hearts to make them feel and act rightly cannot have been inconsistent with such righteous exercise of His judgment upon their conduct, and upon the state of mind which their conduct made manifest. The relation of Divine influence upon men to men's voluntary action, and to their character, and to God's just judgment of them, is one of the most difficult problems of theology. The different attempted solutions of it have had much to do with the classifications of theologians under the names of great theological leaders, as of Calvin and Arminius, or into parties, as Old School and New School, for example. How human character can be determined by Divine influence, and still be character, retaining all the elements of responsibility, no one has yet so explained as to satisfy all other equally candid and clear-minded persons. For myself, I propose to be content without such explanation until, by God's mercy, I may stand on a higher point of view, and may look with a more clarified vision than I expect to have in this world. We can never justify or excuse our wrong conduct or our disobedient or unlovely or unholy dispositions by ascribing them to God's withholding from us the influence which would have begotten right dispositions. The "sons of Belial" who scoffed at Saul and turned away contemptuously from him were wicked men in so doing. Saul could not help blaming them; you cannot; God cannot. Are any of you painfully sensible of failure to be and to do what God reasonably demands of you? It certainly is not best for you simply to lash yourselves up to frantic endeavour or hasty resolution to do better. You will not do better without an influence from God moving and helping you thereto. Seek that influence in simple, frequent, persistent prayer. Every influence of which any of you are conscious, impelling you in any direction which you know to be right, to any service of usefulness which you honestly regard as work for God,—be assured that that influence is Divine. That is God touching your heart. Turn not away. (*H. A. Nelson, D.D.*) *Unity in Christian labour*:—The idea that I gather from the incident is, that, not alone, but with those whom God sent, Saul now undertook, and afterwards discharged, the momentous duties of his high office. And without pressing the analogy too far, I think this fact supplies several lessons suited to our present circumstances. The position of the ministry is one, than which, even that of the monarch, is not more important. The subject then that I shall notice, as suggested by our text, is Unity in Christian labour. And concerning it we observe:—I. IT IS A DESIR-

ABLE THING. We feel its desirability when we remember:—1. That it secures Church concord. By Church concord, I mean that genuine kindredness of sympathy, that oneness of heart, that binds every individual of the Church, and of all Churches, very closely to each other; that will lead all to feel that they are members of one body. For concord in the Church there must be no rigidity of thought, no monotony of feeling, but a blending of the varied sympathies, a mingling of the thoughts, and a harmony of the hearts of all. 2. It secures Church attraction. As all men, with but a few pitiable exceptions, love true music, are attracted to it, and spell-bound by it, so the harmony of Christians will attract and over-awe the world. 3. It will secure Church power. Bind together threads, condense steam, focalise light, and you give even to these things an unimagined strength. Unite souls, weld together hearts, and who will dare defy their power? Concerning unity in Christian labour, I notice:—II. IT IS A PRACTICABLE THING. Such a unity as has been described is then desirable, but can it be obtained? There are three things requisite to this unity, and the mere statement of them will show practicability. 1. Are we agreed in aim? It is only when one purpose directs the sinewy efforts of all the crew, that their united endeavours rescue from peril the storm-tossed ship; it is only when every heart is fired with the same desire, that victory crowns the struggles of an united army. And so with us. With one aim ruling we shall be one. 2. But are we agreed as to the means by which this end is to be obtained? It is said, that the Emperor Constantine, in one of his campaigns, saw in the heavens the sign of a cross, and under it the words, "By this conquer," and that henceforth that was his motto. Have we been to Calvary, and seen there the cross and Him that hung on it. Pointing to it, is 'our watchword "By this conquer?" 3. Are we agreed as to the spirit in which we will work? Is it our earnest vow in God's strength, never to exalt ourselves, never to use His work as a ladder to reach our own purposes, never to labour for God, as many do, in a spirit more fitting the service of Satan? Can we say "The love of Christ constraineth us?" The question, how can we obtain them, leads me to notice, concerning this unity of Christian labour:—III. IT IS A DIVINE THING. "Whose heart God had touched." God's influence on the heart alone can produce that unity of which we have been speaking. I observe:—1. That an entire change of heart is necessary to this unity. Self-seeking in the world, bigotry, and sectarianism, which are but other forms of self-seeking, in the Church; these are the too prevalent spirit among men. As long as there is sin reigning in our hearts they cannot be united. Robertson has strikingly said, "A dreadful loneliness is the result of sinning; the heart severed from God, feels severed from all other hearts; goes alone as if it had neither part nor lot with other men; itself a shadow among shadows." To get unity then there must be a thorough purification, a radical change. Instead of injuring men, delighting in sin, idolising self, and serving Satan, we must bless men, rejoice in holiness, crucify self, and love God. 2. That this change is accomplished by the touch of God. Three of the ways in which God touches our hearts, are like the ways in which we generally touch each other, but He has also other ways possessed by Him alone. He touches the heart by a look. As when "Peter went out and wept bitterly," and Hagar uttered her dread conviction, "Thou God seest me." He touches the heart by acts of kindness. In the gifts of His Providence; and far above all in the life and death of His only begotten Son. He touches our heart by His word. The word of warning counsel, promise, and welcome. So we can touch each other by looks, actions, and words. But God has avenues to the heart that are unknown to us, for His hands are upon secret springs of our nature. He touches us by the direct influence of His Spirit. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Unsociable Christians*:—"The Egyptians, in their hieroglyphics, expressed the unprofitableness of a solitary man by a single millstone, which, being alone, grindeth no meal, though with its fellows it would be exceedingly profitable for that purpose." Let this serve as a symbol to those unsociable Christians who endeavour to walk alone, and refuse to enter into the fellowship of the saints. They are comparatively useless. The Lord hath made us dependent upon each other for usefulness. Our attainments are not put to their right use till they supply the deficiencies of others: this is one side of our necessity for fellowship—we need to associate with the weak, that we may find a sphere in which to trade with our talents, by helping them. On the other hand, our infirmities and deficiencies are meant to draw us into association with stronger brethren, from whom we may receive help. (*C. H.*

Spurgeon.) *Advantages of unity*:—To separate ourselves from our brethren is to lose power. Half-dead brands heaped close will kindle one another, and flame will sparkle beneath the film of white ashes on their edges. Fling them apart, and they go out. Rake them together, and they glow. Let us try not to be little, feeble tapers, stuck in separate sockets, and each twinkling struggling rays over some inch or so of space; but draw near to our brethren, and be workers together. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The holy band*:—The ancient Thebans had in their armies a band of men that were called "the holy band," consisting of such from the various regiments and battalions as were joined together in a bond of love, and were sworn to live and die together in the service of their country. These men were reckoned of great value. They were esteemed the strength of the army, and in time of special danger or alarm were looked to as the nation's hope. (*W. Denton.*)

Ver. 27. But the children of Belial said.—*The sons of Belial*:—The word Belial is found but once in the New Testament (2 Cor. vi. 15). In the Hebrew of the Old Testament it is found twenty-seven times. It is several times translated wicked (Deut. xv. 9; Job xxxiv. 18; Ps. ci. 8; Neh. i. 11, 15). It is also rendered ungodly (Prov. xvi. 17; xix. 28). It is twice rendered ungodly men (2 Sam. xxii. 5; Ps. xviii. 4). In Psalm xli. 8, it is rendered evil, and in Proverbs vi. 12, naughty. In all other places it is simply transferred from the original to the common version; and so we read of a man of Belial, men of Belial, a son of Belial, the sons of Belial, and children of Belial. As a designation of character the word always points to the vile—those who draw iniquity with a cart-rope. Indeed, the word Belial itself seems to mean worthlessness, nothingness, or destruction. That vile men are worthless, and can at last be put to no good purpose, but to be burned, is argued at length in Ezekiel xv. See Prov. x. 20; Matt. xxv. 30; Rom. iii. 12, 16. A man of Belial is one who destroys much good, but he restores nothing; scatters much wretchedness, but makes no one happy, and is dead while he lives, because he lives to himself. He is a vain, naughty, worthless, wretched being. The Anakims are an extinct race; but the sons of Belial live on, and are many. This is strange, for but few of them live out half their days. Their vices are very wasting. But still they are numerous. David speaks of floods of them in his time. Where wicked laws prevail and wicked men are in power, they are spawned by the thousand. When Ahab and Jezebel have sway the dogs will be licking up the blood of innocent men. (*W. L. Plumer, D.D.*) *The importance of self-command in a leader*:—Said Napoleon concerning his success as a military leader: "My extreme youth when I took command of the army of Italy made it necessary for me to evince great reserve of manner, and the utmost severity of morals. This was indispensable to enable me to sustain authority over men so greatly superior in age and experience. I pursued a line of conduct in the highest degree irreproachable and exemplary. In spotless morality I was a Cato, and must have appeared such to all. I was a philosopher and a sage. My supremacy could be retained only by proving myself a better man than any other in the army. Had I yielded to human weaknesses, I should have lost my power."

CHAPTER XI.

VERS. 1—11. Then Nahash the Ammonite came up.—*The immediate consequences of a national rejection of God*:—In the opening verses of this chapter we see the result of disobedience. Instead of happiness for Israel, we fear that the invasion of which we now read, is but too prophetic of those awful retributions which Samuel declared should come upon their wilful rejection of the Divine Being. We take these words as illustrative of the consequences of a national rejection of God. **I. THAT WHEN A NATION REJECTS GOD IT MAY VERY NATURALLY EXPECT TO BE TROUBLED BY ENEMIES.** There appears to have existed an old land quarrel between these two peoples, which had occasioned the battle just mentioned, and which at this time they strive to revenge and recover. In the

light of this history we gather that—1. They were enemies of long standing. It was a deep-seated hatred that time had almost rendered chronic. It is easy to settle the dispute of yesterday, but when years have passed they make the breach almost impassable. Thus God rendered dark the hope of Israel through enemies of the longest standing and the most dreaded. (1.) Would be bitter enemies. (2.) Would be despotic enemies. 2. They were enemies that had been previously defeated. They had been most severely routed by Jephthah. The relatives, friends, and companions of these warriors now threatening Israel with invasion were slain in that conflict. Truly, Israel had need to fear such a foe. 3. These enemies were most opportune in their attack upon Israel. (1.) As regards the place. It was near to their own country, and was also extremely weak. (2.) As regards the time of this threatened invasion. Israel was in a most unsettled condition. The people were in a transition state, just changing an old form of government for a new one, consequently were very much occupied with their own affairs. There were new arrangements to make adapted to the changed condition of things. All the strength, skill, and time that the nation could command was required to be expended upon itself, to give it permanency, and to give freedom from civil faction. Hence the Israelites were totally unprepared for woe, and especially with so powerful a foe. II. THAT WHEN A NATION REJECTS GOD ITS DEGRADATION IS CERTAIN TO FOLLOW. Nahash assumes the weakness of the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and their consequent inability to defend themselves from his army. He therefore commences at once to propose the most painful and humiliating condition of peace. A condition indeed which would involve the whole nation in disgrace. 1. These people are about to degrade the noble achievements of their ancestors. And this is a true characteristic of a nation that has rejected God. When they have rejected Him, the next thing to do is to throw away all the sacred memories of the past, and to nullify their meaning. 2. These people are far more careful about their own comfort than the memories of their past history. They would a great deal rather undo the achievements of their ancestors than lose their own eyes. 3. These people were willing to degrade themselves by the breaking of a Divine Law. They wanted to make a covenant with the Ammonites, which had been strictly forbidden by God. This is just what we might have expected. It is only natural that, after they had dethroned the Divine Being, they should infringe His law. 4. These people are degraded by doubting the bravery of their country. When citizens lose confidence in their defenders it is a sure sign that elements of weakness are mining the society prejudicial to its welfare. May we never lose faith in the heroism of our country! III. THESE ENEMIES AND THIS DEGRADATION CAME IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE NATION HAD REJECTED GOD IN PROCLAIMING THE NEW KING. 1. As a reminder. To make the Israelites very careful in their revolution, and to give them to feel that although they had got a king, he could not remove them from the touch, nor could he shelter them from the displeasure of God. 2. As a prognostication. That notwithstanding their rejoicing at the public recognition of the new king, the future history of the nation could not be altogether smooth and glad. It was the calm before the tempest, and the invasion by the Ammonites was the first peal of thunder announcing the nearing storm. Lessons—(1.) For a nation to reject God is for it truly to forsake its best welfare—political, social, and moral. (2.) That a nation rejecting God is sure to meet with numerous difficulties. (3.) That a nation by rejecting God introduces into its history the true element of its ruin. (4.) This national destruction or sorrow may be delayed, but it is certain. (*Joseph S. Ezell, M.A.*) *The relief of Jabesh-Gilead*:—Primitive though the state of society was in those days in Israel, we are hardly prepared to find Saul following the herd in the field after his election as king of Israel. We are compelled to conclude that the opposition to him was far from contemptible in number and in influence, and that he found it expedient in the meantime to make no demonstration of royalty, but continue his old way of life. Human life was of so little value in those Eastern countries, and the crime of destroying it was so little thought of, that if Saul had in any way provoked hostility, he would have been almost certain to fall by some assassin's hand. It was therefore wise of him to continue for a time his old way of living, and wait for some opportunity which should arise providentially, to vindicate his title to the sceptre of Israel. Apparently he had not to wait long—according to Josephus, only a month. The opportunity arose in a somewhat out-of-the-way part of the country, where disturbance had been brewing previous to his election (comp. xii.

12). Very probably the Ammonites had never forgotten the humiliation inflicted on them by Jephthah, when he smote them "from Arocr, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and till thou come to the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter." Naturally the Ammonites would be desirous both to avenge these defeats and to regain their cities, or at least to get other cities in lieu of what they had lost. The history of the Israelites in time of danger commonly presents one or other of two extremes: either pusillanimous submission, or daring defiance to the hostile power. In this case it was pusillanimous submission, as indeed it commonly was when the people followed the motions of their own hearts, and were not electrified into opposition by some great hero, full of faith in God. But it was not mere cowardice they displayed in offering to become the servants of the Ammonites; there was impiety in it likewise. For of their relation to God they made no account whatever. By covenant with their fathers, ratified from generation to generation, they were God's servants, and they had no right voluntarily to transfer to another master the allegiance which was due to God alone. And it was not a case of necessity. Instead of humbling themselves before God and confessing the sins that had brought them into trouble, they put God altogether aside, and basely offered to become the servants of the Ammonites. How often do men virtually say to the devil, "Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee"! Men and women, with strong proclivities to sin, may for a time resist, but they get tired of the battle; they long for an easier life, and they say in their hearts, "We will resist no longer; we will become your servants." They are willing to make peace with the Ammonites, because they are wearied of fighting. "Anything for a quiet life!" They surrender to the enemy, they are willing to serve sin, because they will not surrender the ease and the pleasures of sin. But sin is a bad master; his wages are terrible to think of. The terms which Nahash offered to the men of Jabesh-Gilead combined insult to injury. "On this condition will I make a covenant with thee: that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach unto all Israel." "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." But Nahash was comparatively merciful. He was willing to let the men of Jabesh off with the loss of one eye only. But as if to compensate for this forbearance, he declared that he would regard the transaction as a reproach upon all Israel. "All the people lifted up their voices and wept." It was just the way in which their forefathers had acted at the Red Sea; and again, it was the way in which they spent that night in the wilderness after the spies brought back their report of the land. But, as in the two earlier cases, there was a man of faith to roll back the wave of panic. As we are thinking how well Saul has acted on this occasion, we perceive that an old friend has come on the scene who helps us materially to understand the situation. Yes, he is all the better of Samuel's guidance and prayers. The good old prophet has no jealousy of the man who took his place at the head of the nation. But knowing well the fickleness of the people, he is anxious to turn the occasion to account for confirming their feelings and their sins. Seeing how the king has acknowledged God as the Author of the victory, he desires to strike while the iron is hot. "Come," he says, "let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there." (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Practical royalty*:—1. It is often true in life that circumstances drive us to make approaches which are not congenial. Men are driven by stress of health or poverty, or some form of perplexity not easily to be named in words, to offer to put themselves into relations with people whom under other circumstances they would never treat with. Such facts in life we are bound to recognise. And it would betoken a poor quality of nature on our part to associate with such recognitions too severe a moral condemnation. Our common proverb is to the effect that "adversity has strange bed-fellows." The men of Jabesh-Gilead, therefore, must be regarded as persons who are under oppressive circumstances, and who are willing to make the best of conditions which are very galling and humiliating. 2. No language is too severe to condemn the barbarous cruelty of Nahash; at the same time he only shows what we might be under circumstances of equal temptation and pressure. When we see how man can treat man, we are enabled to reason upwards, and to see how possible it is for man to treat God profanely and blasphemously. When man loves God he loves his neighbour also; but when man ceases to love his neighbour, and then passes from mere displeasure to positive and cruel hatred, it is easy for him to carry the spirit of hostility further and to include in its base action even all that is heavenly and Divine. The moment we can treat a man

unjustly and cruelly we have disqualified ourselves for true prayer and real communion with Heaven. Let there be no mistake about this matter. We cannot give up our philanthropy and retain our Christianity. 3. Saul was engaged in his usual pursuits. The King of Israel was actually discharging offices with the herd in the field, attending to the wants of his cattle, and otherwise going about his business soberly and quietly. No intimation of unusual circumstances seems to have reached him. How unconscious we sometimes are of the circumstances which are nearest to us—unconscious, that is to say, of their real import and deepest meaning! When we think all is proceeding as usual we may be within touch of some occurrence that will determine all the remaining actions of our life. The commonplace and the marvellous often lie closely together. The picture, then, is that of a great man attending to simple daily duties, and it will be a sad day for any people who imagine that simple daily duties are not worthy of the dignity even of the greatest man. Society has a right to expect great things from great men. No greater tribute could be paid to Saul than that threatened and despairing men should appeal to him in the time of their agony. The men who shouted, "God save the king," did not pay Saul so fine a tribute as the men who came to him in their extremity and asked for his sympathy and assistance. No sooner had Saul heard the condition proposed by the King of Ammon than he burned with anger. We can best describe a certain quality of anger by tracing it to the direct action of the Spirit of God. Truly, there is a holy indignation. The sublime enthusiasm of Saul kindled the faith of the people. A modern commentary, referring to this passage, has the following illustrative remarks:—"It was owing to some influence of a similar nature that, with scanty numbers, ill-armed, and ill-trained, the Swiss won for their land centuries of freedom on memorable fields like Laupen and Morat, though the proudest chivalry of Europe was arrayed against them. It was the same spirit which impelled the peace-loving traders of the marshes of Holland to rise as one man, and to drive out for ever from their loved strip of Fenland the hitherto invincible armies of Spain. No oppressor, though backed by the wealth and power of an empire, has ever been able to resist the smallest people in whose heart has burned the flame of the Divine fire of the fear of the Lord." All these circumstances would be of little or no concern to us if they did not point to a great spiritual reality. Tremendous foes besiege us on every side. What is our defence in such time of assault? It is the fear of the Lord, the Spirit of God, the Divine energy. God delights in humbling the boastful and vainglorious. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." Presumption is always self-defeating; it is so in business, in war, in statesmanship, and in every act and department of rational life. 4. Notice that this was not entered upon without preparation. There was no rush or haste in the matter. Sometimes we proceed most swiftly when we seem to advance most slowly. There should be a time for gathering strength together, measuring the situation in all its dimensions, consulting Divine decrees, and putting the soul into right relations with God. After such preparation everything will go rapidly. Every stroke will be a victory. 5. A fit ending to a tragical process. Gilgal was a sanctuary. After great doings on the field of battle we must return to the house of prayer, we must, indeed, return to the place where we began. We should enter upon no conflict until after we have been in the sanctuary, and having completed the conflict we should return to the altar. Enter upon nothing that cannot be sanctified at holy places and by holy names. There is nothing too insignificant to be associated with the most solemn acts of worship; or if we are conscious of such insignificance, we should not undertake the affairs which admit of its application. Learn the useful lesson that Saul did not thrust himself into prominence, and that even after he was appointed king of Israel he went about his usual avocations until there was something worthy of kingliness to be publicly done. Let us be rebuked in so far as we have supposed that we were released from duty until some great and critical occasion arose. Having obtained our literary prize, let us go home and take up the business of life in a quiet way. Do not think that anything which nature or society requires of us is below our dignity because we have achieved this or that popular success. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. His anger was greatly kindled.—*Divine indignation*:—My subject is Divine indignation—its advantage, its characteristics, and its limitation. I. MARK THE ADVANTAGE OF A GOOD, WHOLESOME INDIGNATION. The situation was a

critical one. Only a month before, as the lxx. give the date, Saul had been anointed king. But it is a weak, disjointed realm of which he is made the head—weak because attacked from without, doubly weak because disunited within. Give Saul a few years of peace, and he will have a chance to produce a different state of affairs. Instead of that God sends the young king and young kingdom through a very baptism of fire and blood. And Israel heard, and the people lifted up their voice and wept—wept in impotent helplessness, wept in pity for their brothers, wept in pity for themselves, because in their own opinion they can do nothing. You may have seen, in an occasional fit of repentance, a man who has sold himself body and soul to drunkenness. You may have heard the maudlin sobs in which he humbles himself because he has been such a ten-times fool as to suffer this enemy to encamp within the frontier lines of his life. And you may have seen him slip back to his vice with the tears of shame not quite dry on his cheeks. The man is not the stronger for those tears; he is the weaker. That was like the state of Israel. There never will be help in such tears while the world lasts. Jabesh-Gilead could weep for itself; even the empty eye sockets which Nahash meant to leave them would still be of use for that. Jabesh-Gilead wants something harder than tears; God's cause wants more than melancholy shakings of the head. God and Israel want a man with a man's heart within him and a man's hand on a sword hilt; and so the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul when he heard those tidings and his anger was kindled greatly. We want something more of that indignation—eager, hot, fiery—which will burn out evil in the hearts and lives of men. Both in the Church and in the market the world needs men who have the courage of their convictions, and who dare act on them. Of such as will shake their heads sagely over the rottenness of this old world we have enough and to spare. Of an idle and ignorant tolerance we have over much. There are some things in human life which should never receive quarter—selfishness, cowardice, and all lying. Give up lamenting for one half-hour, and do something to rid the earth of these, something to cleanse your own life of these, and you will not go back to the weeping, having found the better way. The Saga of our pagan ancestors imagined human life as a great tree whose roots were set deep in the earth while the branches towered up to heaven. But a great snake gnawed at the trunk continually, and would, so ran the tale, bring it to the ground one day. There is that great three-headed snake, which is gnawing still at the trunk of our social and national life, and its three heads are faithlessness, lust, and drunkenness. It is time that vain regrets were done with, that weak and mean excuses for these things were put away, and that the Church, believing in her Divine Head, awoke to her part as a company of those who are banded together to do battle to the death against those things which rot the heart out of life. Who will go forth unto the war with us against these? The effort is useless without a spark of God's own righteous indignation in the hearts of men.

II. MARK THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS INDIGNATION. "Human anger resents the hurt, Divine anger resents the wrong." Can you make the distinction, for it is a weighty one? It was the foul wrong meditated against Israel, and through Israel against Jehovah, which passed like fire into Saul's blood. Divine anger hates sin because it is sin. There is many a man who repents of his sin after it has been found out. Here one who regrets his drunken habits after they have cost him his situation. So long as they only threatened to cost him his soul he heeded not. There one who sorrows over her shattered reputation after it is published to the world. So long as only God knew it did not greatly matter. It is a cruel and bitter mistake, that of hating sin's results instead of loathing sin itself. It came to pass that Jesus was led up to Pilate to be tried for His life, and there He was scourged and condemned. And when all this was so fully under way that no human power could stop it, Judas went up to the temple, and, scattering his blood-money before the priests, went out into the darkness and hanged himself. All earth and hell might have laughed to scorn the man's folly. Was his sin made any greater because the crucifixion resulted from it? Was that traitor kiss made any blacker because it led to the darkness of Joseph's tomb? No. We need to see sin as God in heaven sees it, and that was one reason why the Cross was set up on Calvary, that we might know how sin appears in the eyes of Him who made us. 2. Another characteristic of this Divine indignation I would have you notice: It is not selfish; it is for God's glory. Mark this in Saul's action. A month or so before, when he was crowned king, certain men would not have him as their ruler. And now, when he comes back victor, his

supporters urge him to bring out these men and to slay them without ruth. But with kingly self-command Saul refuses. His sword is to be drawn against the enemies of God, not against the foes of his own fame. His indignation is hot against Ammon, for Ammon is Jehovah's foe. His indignation is nil against these men, for they are only his private enemies. Human indignation is often selfish; Divine anger is fired at any indignity done to God's glory. Cannot one see the distinction in our Lord's own life? When His enemies railed at Him as a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, He held His peace, or only uttered words of solemn warning against their wilful closing of their eyes to the light. But when He saw the temple courts clogged with the tables of the money-changers, and the pavements defiled by the sellers of pigeons and lambs, He took a lash of knotted cords and bound it round His hand and drove them out. And when He saw the Pharisee taking the very kitchen-spices of the widow, but hold himself free, He spoke words which fell like molten metal on these men. It is easy to see when we are hurt, easier to resent it. That is very human. It is Divine when a man sees his brother made in the image of God outraged, and keep all his indignation for the cause of God. Suspect your anger when there is self-interest in it; trust it when it burns hot for justice to your brother. III. MARK THE LIMITATION OF THIS INDIGNATION. I mean that it will not, that it cannot make up the whole of religion. It needs more than hate of wrong to do that; it needs the love of right. Religion is to love God even more than to hate the devil; and the latter is most valuable when it is a means of leading to the former. I have spoken already of how wofully Saul fell away from this position in which he here stands. He fought for God against Ammon when fighting against Ammon did him no hurt. He fought against God in hunting down David, when David's life seemed to threaten his throne. His indignation burned hot where his self-interest was not involved; but it went out with a hiss when that can come into play. It is only the fine flame of love—love to right and truth and fairplay, love to Jesus Christ—which will bear a man through life scathless, and at last present him faultless at Christ's appearing. Do not be content till you have gained that. For indignation melts in the fierce flame of passion, and hatred of wrong vanishes when wrong ministers to one's own wishes. (*A. C. Welch, B.D.*) *Chivalry*:—It is pleasant to record of Lord Byron (amidst so much of an opposite character), that in his boyhood at Harrow, finding a new scholar, suffering, like himself, from lameness, he said, "Let me know if any fellow bullies you, and I'll thrash him if I can!" The boy, who became a clergyman in after-life, never forgot this piece of chivalry.

Vers. 7-11. **And he took a yoke of oxen.**—*Rallying to the King's standard*:—Everything seems to point to this as the time when a decisive blow may be struck. If we are only equal to the situation, we may do something effectual in our time for the spread of the kingdom of God. I daresay you remember that scene in Scott's 'Lady of the Lake,' where Roderick Dhu gathers the clan to war by sending through the land the cross dipped in blood. Wherever the symbol went there was a general uprising, and Norman left his new-made bride and took hold of the consecrated symbol, and rushed forth to rouse the land, and all the minor duties were absorbed in the one great and one all-absorbing duty to the cross. Oh, would that this spirit possessed all the clansmen of Jesus, and when He sends His Cross through the land let us not remain among our joys or sorrows or minor duties, but let us rally to His side and strike for victory. And into this missionary crusade we may enter with every assurance of success. (*Hugh Brown.*) *Enthusiastic leaders*:—Cæsar might never have conquered Britain if his standard-bearer had not aroused the soldiers by leaping into the water and rushing for the shore, and many a splendid possibility is lost for lack of enthusiasm to lead off. We seem afraid of it; we put off our boots and dabble about the edge of it, but catch us tripping and taking a header! (*Weekly Pulpit.*)

Ver. 13. **There shall not a man be put to death this day.**—*A magnanimous king*:—Louis XII. of France is known in history as a most magnanimous prince towards his enemies. On his accession he caused a list of these to be drawn up, and marked against each name a black cross. This was looked upon by them that they were singled out for punishment, and they accordingly fled. When Louis heard of it, he had them called into his presence and assured them that they had no cause for alarm, since the reason why he had placed the cross

against their names was to keep him in mind of the Cross that brings pardon to all. Among those who sought his pardon at this time were the magistrates of Orleans, who had subjected him to such indignities while he was detained as a prisoner in their city. Their deputation he dismissed courteously with the generous reply that "it did not become the King of France to resent the injuries of the Duke of Orleans." Of a like spirit was Lord Nelson, who penned in his cabin on the morning of the battle of Trafalgar: "May humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet." (*Charles Deal.*) *The best way to conquer an enemy*:—Henry IV. of France was wont to say that he was able to conquer all his enemies, by treating them with such clemency and kindness when they were in his power that they were changed into loyal subjects.

Vers. 14, 15. **Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.**—*The renewing of the kingdom*:—"Gilgal!" The word means a wheel, a revolution. And is not the great circumference of the year, measured as it is by a few hundred days in the poor chronicle of our lives, but by hundreds of millions of miles in the celestial spaces—is it not just rounding up into longer light, and beginning its benevolent motion for us afresh? We hear, too, of "the renewing of a kingdom"; and those words impress us at once with some idea, though it may be an indistinct one, of a renewal nearer home, that we are to solemnize; more important to us than the sweep of an unconscious planet, than the changes of empire past or to come, or any of the outward distinctions of the world. The shadows of the future gathered over Samuel's serene brow and his religious spirit; and he replied in the words that I have read: "Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there." That had been a hallowed place from the time that the Hebrew tribes entered the land. It had been consecrated by religion and good success. There was the proper spot to repeat their vows, to remember their obligations. It was aloof from public clamour and the highways of ordinary life. There, where the Almighty had "rolled away the reproach" of His people, in the time when He alone was acknowledged as their sovereign, should they repeat their allegiance to the new monarch whom they had chosen. There, in the face of that dread majesty, soberly and apart, and not in the stir of a sudden triumph, and not among the scenes of every-day passions, they should "renew the kingdom." Let the engagements that are made with a man's self be now established. Let the hopes of a Christian soul receive an increasing lustre. Let the pledges you owe to the powers of heaven be cheerfully brought.

1. We may observe, in the first place, **THAT WE ARE NOW "RENEWING THE KINGDOM" OF OUR EARTHLY DAYS.** The year is renewed for us. The light is a little earlier in the eastern sky, and lingers a little upon its farewell in the west. As if nature was unwilling to bring two of its greatest dreads upon man at once—at least in their fullest degree—the darkness gives way as the cold increases. A new account is opening with Time, that rigorous master. But how, you may ask, can we make any compact with him? He calls all seasons and places and lives his own. His dominion is absolute. He accepts no conditions from us. Without asking whether or not we are ready to confirm his authority, he will lead us through his inevitable changes, he will bring us down to his universal level of dust. And yet, when we confront him, with God to help, and in the holy places of our nature, we feel that we are possessed of a dominion more enduring than his own; that we have thoughts which are independent of him, and hopes beyond his reach. We can oblige him to serve our best interests, which we are apparently but the subjects of his despotic rule. We are apt to consider him as a tyrant, the enemy of human liberty and enjoyment, inaccessible to pity, and producing but what he means to desolate. His symbol is the falling sands of an hour-glass. His crown is an eternal baldness. His sceptre is a scythe for all the green growths of mortality. But we are thus paralysing our proper strength, and undervaluing our real importance in the comparison with him. What has Time to do with any of the conclusions of the reason, or any of the fruits of the Spirit; with the very thought of duty, or the recompenses of its award? The soul, in its purest exercises, soars far above him; and in its farthest abstractions cannot see that he exists. But call him a real king; and invest him with all the majesty that timid fancies have conceived. Even then we may meet him upon grounds of mutual respect. We may call a convention with him at Gilgal. We may stipulate concerning some of the powers of his government. We may say to him with firmness, and so that he shall be influenced by what we say—Sire, we are your

children, in truth; we are your subjects, beyond the subjection that any earthly monarch receives or claims. Our limbs are at your disposal, and our furrowing cheeks, and the locks of our heads. Our treasure is yours, to consume or to divide. Our blood is yours, to chill in the veins of our age, or to shed by calamitous appointments. We offer you no resistance. But for all this you must perform something on your part. You must bestow upon us opportunity. You must yield to us supplies. The means of knowledge and improvement you must not only leave unviolated, but increased. You must observe the just limits of your sway. The rights of conscience and of the whole mind you must scrupulously respect. You must lay no tyranny upon our honest wills. You shall not blight our hearts, through fear of you, with any of the strokes of that despotism to which we have surrendered our persons. So will we, on this new year's day, stand in our Gilgal, and "renew the kingdom" with you there. II. I now ask you to turn away from time, and from every dominion of an outward sort, AND CONSIDER THE EMPIRE THAT IS WITHIN US. Here we have to deal, indeed, with ourselves only. But that does not exclude the danger of being deceived, and oppressed, and defrauded. Evil temptations will arise, and unwise counsellors. Despotism will be attempted. Anarchy will be afoot. There will be rebellion. Licentious principles will spurn at the wholesome restraints of law. Ignorance will mistake, and presumption will be daring. Let us, in this respect above all others, "renew the kingdom" to-day. If the same prophet whom I have imagined speaking before, should again take up his parable, he would say:—

1. Now "renew" your good resolutions. What an uncertain kingdom is that of our purposes! We determine and fall short. We attempt in a feeble way, and fail, as every thing that is feeble must. Some tell us that we can do nothing if we try; and others tell us that we can gain nothing if we succeed. Fable! We depend as much at least on the struggles that we make as on the destiny that is ordained. To aspire is better than the contented fool's best portion. To work towards an approved end is infinitely richer than any counted and measured success.
2. "Renew" your affections. Balance them, and let none of them act the absolute king. Purify them from their soils. Brush away the rust and the dust that have gathered upon them from vulgar uses or a base inaction. Send them forth with a clearer light and a more blessed efficacy. Bring into a beautiful order the dispositions that bind you to your kindred, to your house, to your friendships, to your country, and to your kind.
3. "Renew" the course of your meditations upon the subjects that concern your most intimate welfare. You may find something faltering and unsettled in them. Establish the principles of your judgment. Bring your conclusions into a harmony. Set up within you a Divine and submissive order, that shall be after the pattern of that eternal one, in the circles of which you dwell.
4. "Renew" your faith. Is not that a kingdom of itself? Is there any thing to be compared to its undecaying dominion? It stands nobly apart from the world's turmoil, the world's command, the world's destruction. You can receive no such strength as flows from that. It is all unsettled in your thoughts. You have allowed momentary interests to intercept its everlasting light. You have allowed a shallow and sluggish scepticism to affront its all-embracing principles. Renew the kingdom of the immortal in the breasts that will soon cease to beat. Renew it, though in the absence of what you desire. Renew it, though in the face of discouragements. Renew it, in its simplicity, in its sovereign beauty, in its reasonableness, in its might. He who came to confirm the best truth with which such a faith is connected, when he ate "the last supper" with His disciples, said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." We perceive that He was speaking, not of a kingdom that was subject to time; not of one that was to be established in His own heart, for nothing there needed confirming; but of that state of peace and glory which is preparing beyond this world's troubles, by the faithful deeds of man, and the abundant love of his Maker. Let every believer anticipate it. Let him labour towards it. Let him make himself a believer indeed. (*N. E. Frothingham.*) *The oath of fidelity that Israel universally swears to the new King*, where note:—1. Samuel's sublime wisdom in making no motion nor mention of this covenant of the kingdom, at Saul's first election, while the people were generally disaffected towards him, because of his mean extract, rustic life, &c., but now when Saul had given them such eminent proofs of his valour and virtue, and when God had honoured him with so glorious a victory, which had made the people place their affections upon

him both eagerly and unanimously; then doth Samuel strike while the iron was hot, and set in with this fit season. 2. Samuel calls a general assembly from Jabesh to Gilgal, which was in their way home to most of them, but more especially because it was a place famous for many public conventions there kept, and particularly for the covenant renewed by Joshua, between God and the people, when God rolled away reproach from Israel in their circumcision, therefore was the place called Gilgal, which signifies rolling, &c. (Joshua v. 8.) 3. Here, 'tis said, the people made Saul king, whereas it was the Lord's immediate act to constitute him king, chap. viii., ix., and x. 1, and the people only accepted of that election the Lord had made for them, recognising the first Act by a renewed universal consent. All now personally swearing allegiance to him to prevent any future factions and insurrections, &c. 4. The ceremonies of Saul's inauguration before the Lord, and His prophet Samuel, some suppose to be these. (1.) They set the King upon his throne. (2.) They crowned him. (3.) They anointed him. (4.) They put the Book of the Law into his hand. (5.) They took an oath of him to observe it. (6.) They offered sacrifices of all sorts upon the altar that was at Gilgal, partly praising God for present mercy both in the victory over Ammon and in their settlement under Saul, from sad distractions, and partly praying to God for his future favour, &c. (7.) Shutting all up with sundry signs of public joy. (C. Ness.)

CHAPTER XII.

Vers. 1—5. And Samuel said unto all Israel.—A statesman's retrospect:—The closing years in the life of Samuel, the last and greatest of the judges, witnessed a transition in the method of governing the nation of Israel from the theocracy to the monarchy. By the wise, unselfish action of Samuel, this transition, which might have involved grave national controversy and bloodshed, was peaceably made. Samuel's work was, therefore, as a ruler, transferred to Saul; and though he continued for some years to exercise the functions of prophet, administrative duties passed into other hands. This address is a fine example of ancient Hebrew eloquence, and it manifestly appealed to the conscience and heart of the audience addressed. It touched upon three important points. I. VINDICATION OF PERSONAL CHARACTER AND ADMINISTRATION. In his splendid review what facts emerged that should commend the retiring leader to the gratitude and appreciation of the nation he had sought to serve? 1. His loyalty to the national request for a king. We know how acutely he had felt his supersession of himself, and how he had directed his prayer to God in respect of it; but he had waived his own strong objection, and had dutifully assisted in the appointment of the divinely selected monarch. 2. His long and blameless life. High position magnifies every human quality, heightens every excellency, and blackens every blot of human character. But Samuel's long career furnished no fault on which the most acute enquiry could fasten, no deviation from the right path that the sternest rectitude could condemn. What a magnificent challenge. 3. His upright administration. Samuel challenged the people on the question of his "official life," as well as on his personal character. His public duties had been as free from exaction and oppression as his private life from moral taint. Nothing is more common, it is said, in Eastern lands, even down to this day, than oppression and exaction on the part of rulers and public men having charge of the government and taxation of the people. II. DEFENCE OF GOD'S PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL. Note:—1. The principle of this government. The theocracy, under which Israel had so long lived and prospered, meant the supreme and recognised sovereignty of God. By the test of experience, the test of practical results on the national life, the theocracy had its amplest vindication. Under it the nation had enjoyed signal prosperity. 2. The agency by which administered. This unique method of national government was carried on by specially selected rulers, appointed as the exigencies of the times demanded. God raised up men—great men—to meet emergencies of national life as they arose. 3. The law by which controlled. This law was the nation's loyalty to God. When the nation was true to its best traditions, true to the faith and worship of the living God, true to the

sublime morality of the Ten Commandments, God's benediction rested upon them, and national prosperity followed. In this memorable address Samuel referred also to:—III. THE CONDITIONS OF CONTINUED NATIONAL PROSPERITY. 1. Changed political conditions do not change moral or religious obligations. King or no king, God's claim on the worship and service of Israel could not be abrogated or diminished. Amid all the changes of their national life, that was the one thing that was changeless. A new king on the throne, or a new form of government of the realm, did not and could not alter that. What is morally wrong cannot be politically right. What is wrong in England is wrong in India. If it is wrong to break the Sabbath at home, it is wrong to break it abroad. Christianity knows no geographical limits in the scope of its message, or the authority of its claims. Public opinion may change and vary, but it ought not, and must not, override the higher and more authoritative law of God. 2. Righteousness exalteth a nation. John Ruskin, in the opening paragraph of his "*Stones of Venice*," tells us that "Since the first dominion of men was asserted over the ocean, three thrones, of mark beyond all others, have been set upon its sands: the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Of the first of these great powers only the memory remains; of the second, the ruin; the third, which inherits their greatness, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction." No lesson is more urgently needed in our time than this. Vice means weakness and decay; virtue, devotion, humanity—these mean strength and permanence. The conditions of national prosperity, then, are clear and uniform. They are reverence for sacred things, obedience to the law of God in personal, social, and national affairs alike, consideration for others, and unselfish service to promote their interests and welfare. (*Thomas Mitchell.*) *Saul's confirmation in the kingship*:—After the great victory over the Ammonites at Jabesh-Gilead, Samuel said to the people, "Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there." The people were in a mood to listen to the advice. They were full of enthusiasm for Saul, and of gratitude to God on account of their splendid success. And Samuel wisely took advantage of the occasion to confirm the loyalty, not only of the people to the king, but also of the king and people to God. 1. After the feast, perhaps in the course of the afternoon, Samuel solemnly addressed the vast assembly. His aim, in the first part of his speech, was to show that they had nothing to justify their demand for a king in the character of his administration. 2. Samuel's aim in the second part of his speech was to show that they had nothing to justify their demand for a king in the character of the Divine administration. 3. But, after convicting them of slighting God in asking for an earthly sovereign, Samuel now speaks to them about their present duty. (*T. Kirk.*) *Samuel's vindication of himself*:—No doubt Samuel felt that, after the victory at Jabesh-Gilead, he had the people in a much more impressible condition than they had been in before; and while their minds were thus so open to impression, it was his duty to urge on them to the very uttermost the truths that bore on their most vital well-being. The reasons why Samuel makes such explicit reference to his past life and such a strong appeal to the people as to its blameless character is that he may establish a powerful claim for the favourable consideration of the advice which he is about to give them. If you have reason to suspect an adviser of a selfish purpose let him argue as he pleases, you do not allow yourselves to be moved by anything he may say. But if you have good cause to know that he is a disinterested man you feel that what such a man urges comes home to you with extraordinary weight. 1. The first consideration he urged was that he had listened to their voice in making them a king. He had not obstructed nor balked them in their strong feeling, though he might reasonably enough have done so. 2. In the next place Samuel adverts to his age. What Samuel delicately points to here is the uniformity of his life. He had not begun on one line, then changed to another. Such steadiness and uniformity throughout a long life genders a wonderful weight of character. Happy the Church, happy the country, that abounds in such worthies!—men, as Thomas Carlyle said of his peasant Christian father, of whom one should be prouder in one's pedigree than of dukes or kings, for what is the glory of mere rank or accidental station compared to the glory of Godlike qualities, and of a character which reflects the image of God Himself? 3. The third point to which Samuel adverts is his freedom from all acts of unjust exaction or oppression, and from all those corrupt practices in the administration of justice which were so common in Eastern countries. Is there nothing here for us to ponder in these

days of intense competition in business and questionable methods of securing gain? Surely the rule of unbending integrity, absolute honesty, and unswerving truth is as binding on the Christian merchant as it was on the Hebrew judge. No doubt Samuel was a poor man, though he might have been rich had he followed the example of heathen rulers. But who does not honour him in his poverty, with his incorruptible integrity and most scrupulous truthfulness, as no man would or could have honoured him had he accumulated the wealth of a Cardinal Wolsey and lived in splendour rivalling royalty itself? It is right that we should very specially take note of the root of this remarkable integrity and truthfulness of his toward men. For we live in times when it is often alleged that religion and morality have no vital connection with each other, and that there may be found an "independent morality" altogether separate from religious profession. Let it be granted that this divorce from morality may be true of religions of an external character, where Divine service is supposed to consist of ritual observances and bodily attitudes and attendances, performed in strict accordance with a very rigid rule. Wherever such performances are looked on as the end of religion they may be utterly dissociated from morality, and one may be, at one and the same time, strictly religious and glaringly immoral. But wherever religion is spiritual and penetrating, wherever sin is seen in its true character, wherever men feel the curse and pollution of sin in their hearts and lives, another spirit rules. The will of God is a terrible rule of life to the natural man—a rule against which he rebels as unreasonable, impracticable, terrible. How then are men brought to pay supreme and constant regard to that will? How was Samuel brought to do this, and how are men led to do it now? In both cases, it is through the influence of gracious, Divine love. Samuel was a member of a nation that God had chosen as His own, that God had redeemed from bondage, that God dwelt among, protected, restored, guided, and blessed beyond all example. The heart of Samuel was moved by God's goodness to the nation. More than that, Samuel personally had been the object of God's redeeming love; and though the hundred-and-third Psalm was not yet written, he could doubtless say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities," etc. It is the same gracious, Divine action, the same experience of redeeming grace and mercy, that under the Christian dispensation draws men's hearts to the will of God; only a new light has been thrown on these Divine qualities by the Cross of Christ. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Samuel on his defence*: The scene explains itself. In olden times, meetings of this kind were held in the open air. In earlier French history, the warriors used to meet in the month of May, and the king was carried round on a shield, to receive their homage. When our king Alfred divided the country into "hundreds," he directed the heads of families to meet together at fixed seasons, the muster-place being sometimes round a well-known tree, and there is in existence to this day such a tree, which gave its name to the hundred or wapen-take. And in the Isle of Man the farmers of the island meet once a year in the open air to transact business, to this very day. Israel in this chapter is met together in the same way. They are under a bright eastern sky, the young king stands before them—a fine figure to behold; perhaps the handsomest man of his time—and by his side stands an old man, hoary, and grey-headed. We must now leave all the rest, and think only of this grey-headed old man. I. THE PUBLIC MAN'S INFLUENCE AND TEMPTATIONS. Samuel spent about fifty years in a public life like this. Consider the influence he would necessarily acquire. If he has become known for being a sound thinker, competent to advise and willing to do so, men never mention his name without respect. They will go and ask him for opinions on matters that it seems almost impertinent to trouble him with. He seems only to live to assist others. Every house is open to him, and he carries many matters of importance without opposition. With such influence, consider what will be his temptations! If he has given a decision favourable to a man, and that man, out of gratitude, sends him a handsome present, how tempting it will be to receive it. In going the round of his sessions he would probably receive hospitality from some of the richer men about; it would be his due. Now, suppose one of these richer men who had entertained him handsomely came into court, how tempting it would be to listen to him a little more favourably! What opportunities, too, he has to benefit his family. A man in such a position has sometimes disagreeable things to do. If he decides one way, he may make a powerful man his enemy. That enemy may annoy him much, may libel his character and torment him terribly. The temp-

tation will then be to get rid of such a tormentor, by oppressing him and putting him down. **II. FIDELITY TO TRUST.** We are all in some places of trust. No man lives for himself alone. It is a very great mistake for any man to suppose that he has no influence. Who is more respected by any right-minded man than an honourable servant of standing character? I don't know any one more entitled to sympathy and kindness than those who have grown hoary and grey in service. Well, then, you that are men and women in the prime of life, whatever be your occupation, put this model before you, this speech of Samuel's. **III. THE JOY OF A PURE CONSCIENCE.** Children and young people, in this life of Samuel there is nothing that you cannot do in your way. Say to yourselves every day as you begin, "I am determined, God being my helper, to be so faithful in all that I do, that no man shall charge me with wronging him." You will fail sometimes, and be grieved at your failure. Yet be not discouraged, but persevere, and you may, if spared to be old and grey-headed, totter down the aisle of your church, or the streets of your village or town, with the consciousness of clean hands. There is no joy unmixed in this world. In his old age Samuel could have applied to himself the words of our great dramatist:—*Tho' I look old, I'm lusty; For never in my youth did I woo the means of debility.* Therefore mine age is as a lusty winter—Frosty, yet kindly. Let me be your servant. I'll do the service of a younger man. But no! the appeal had not its right effect. His countrymen were not grateful to him, as they ought to have been; they wanted this young king—something new—and the old man in his old age was to be forgotten. We must be prepared to be misunderstood—to find even a friend, who ought to know better, grow cool. But, firm in our upright course, we must fall back on the approbation of a pure conscience. A man need not skulk and hang his head if his conscience tells him that he has nothing to be ashamed of; rather will it whisper to him peace amidst the gloom that might dishearten him. (*H. Hiley, D.D.*) *Appointment of the first king in Israel:*—Israel was in the position of a boat which has been borne down a swift stream into the very suction of the rapids. The best would be that she should be put back; but if it be too late for this, then the best is that there should be in her a strong arm and a steady eye to keep her head straight. And thus it was with Israel. She plunged down the fall madly, rashly, wickedly; but under Samuel's control, steadily. This part of the chapter we arrange in two branches:—**I. SAMUEL'S CONDUCT AFTER THE MORTIFICATION OF HIS OWN REJECTION.** The people having accepted Saul as their king, had been dismissed, and Samuel was left alone, but his feelings were very different from those which he had in that other moment of solitude, when he had dismissed the delegates of the people. That struggle was past. He was now calm. The first moment was a terrible one. It was one of those periods in human life when the whole meaning of life is perplexed, its aims and hopes frustrated; when a man is down upon his face and gust after gust sweeps desolately over his spirit. Samuel was there to feel all the ideas that naturally suggest themselves in such hours—the instability of human affection—the nothingness of the highest earthly aims. But by degrees, two thoughts calmed him. The first was the feeling of identification with God's cause. "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me." The other element of consolation was the Divine sympathy. If they had been rebellious to their ruler, they had also been disloyal to Jehovah. Atheism and revolution here, as elsewhere, went hand-in-hand. We do not know how this sentence was impressed by the Infinite Mind on Samuel's mind; all we know is, he had a conviction that God was a fellow sufferer. The many-coloured phases of human feeling all find themselves reflected in the lights and shadows of ever-varying sensitiveness which the different sentences of His conversation exhibit. Be your tone of feeling what it may, whether you are poor or rich, gay or sad—in society or alone—adored, loved, betrayed, misunderstood, despised—weigh well His words first, by thinking what they mean, and you will become aware that one heart in space throbs in conscious harmony with yours. In its degree, that was Samuel's support. Next, Samuel's cheerful way of submitting to his fate is to be observed. Another prophet, when his prediction was nullified, built himself a booth and sat beneath it, fretting in sullen pride, to see the end of Nineveh. Samuel might have done this; he might have withdrawn himself in offended dignity from public life, watched the impotent attempts of the people to guide themselves, and seen dynasty after dynasty fall with secret pleasure. Very different is his conduct. He addresses himself like a man to the exigencies of the moment. Now remark in all this, the healthy, vigorous tone of Samuel's religion.

This man, the greatest and wisest then alive, thought this the great thing to live for—to establish a kingdom of God on earth—to transform his own country into a kingdom of God. It is worth while to see how he set about it. From first to last it was in a practical, real way—by activity in every department of life. Now he is deposed: but he has duties still. He has a king to look for, public festivals to superintend, a public feast to preside over; and later on we shall find him becoming the teacher of a school. All this was a religion for life. His spirituality was no fanciful, shadowy thing; the kingdom of God to him was to be in this world, and we know no surer sign of enfeebled religion than the disposition to separate religion from life and life-duties. Listen: What is secularity or worldliness? Meddling with worldly things? or meddling with a worldly spirit? We brand political existence and thought with the name "worldly"—we stigmatise first one department of life and then another as secular; and so religion becomes a pale, unreal thing, which must end, if we are only true to our principles, in the cloister. Religion becomes feeble, and the world, deserted and proscribed, becomes infidel.

II. SAMUEL'S TREATMENT OF HIS SUCCESSOR, AFTER HIS OWN REJECTION, IS REMARKABLE. It was characterised by two things—courtesy and generosity. When he saw the man who was to be his successor, he invited him to the entertainment. This is politeness; what we allude to is a very different thing, however, from that mere system of etiquette and conventionalisms in which small minds find their very being, to observe which accurately is life, and to transgress which is sin. Courtesy is not confined to the high-bred; often theirs is but the artistic imitation of courtesy. The peasant who rises to put before you his only chair, while he sits upon the oaken chest, is a polite man. Motive determines everything. Something still more beautiful marks Samuel's generosity. The man who stood before him was a successful rival. One who had been his inferior now was to supersede him. And Samuel lends him a helping hand—gracefully assists him to rise above him, entertains him, recommends him to the people. It is very touching. Samuel and the people did the same thing—they made Saul king. But the people did it by drawing down Samuel nearer to themselves. Samuel did it by elevating Saul above himself. One was the spirit of revolution, the other was the spirit of the Gospel. In our own day it specially behoves us to try the spirits, whether they be of God. The reality and the counterfeit, as in this case, are singularly like each other. Three spirits make their voices heard, in a cry for Freedom, for Brotherhood, for human Equality. And we must not forget, these names are hallowed by the very Gospel itself. Unless we realise them we have no Gospel kingdom. Distinguish, however, well the reality from the baser alloy. The spirit which longs for freedom puts forth a righteous claim; for it is written, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Brotherhood—the Gospel promises brotherhood also—"One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." Equality—Yes. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free." This is the grand Federation, Brotherhood, Emancipation of the human race. Now the world's spirit aims at bringing all this about by drawing others down to the level on which each one stands. The Christian spirit secures equality by raising up. The man that is less wise, less good than I—I am to raise up to my level in these things. Yes, and in social position too, if he be fit for it. I am to be glad to see him rise above me, as generously as Samuel saw Saul. And if we could but all work in this generous rivalry, our rent and bleeding country, sick at heart, gangrened with an exclusiveness, which narrows our sympathies and corrupts our hearts, might be all that the most patriotic love would have her. Once more there is suggested to us the thought that Samuel was now growing old. They might forget Samuel—they might crowd round his successor—but Samuel's work could not be forgotten; years after he was quiet and silent under ground, his courts in Bethel and Mizpeh would form the precedents and the germs of the national jurisprudence. A very pregnant lesson. Life passes, work is permanent. It is all going—fleeting and withering. Youth goes. Mind decays. That which is done remains. Deeds never die. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Samuel, seer and statesman*:—The character of Samuel itself is one which surely sets before us a type of that class of character which we can see in all departments of public life. Will you allow me to ask you to notice not merely the greatness of Samuel, but those causes which seem to have contributed to the formation of that character which lay at the back of his greatness? First, I may remind you how great Samuel was in the history of Israel. He has been called the second Moses, and not without reason. I. THE

GREATNESS OF SAMUEL IS SEEN IN THE THREE-FOLD ASPECT OF HIS LIFE. He was great as a judge in an era of considerable political confusion; he was great in that he founded, or was considered to have founded, what was called the school of prophets; and he was great also in that, in an era of transition, he acted as a consummate statesman. We have only to recall the significance of those three statements to see how widespread and enduring was that quality of Samuel's greatness. As a judge in an era of confusion he showed exactly those qualities which were so much needed. And you mark that he had seen some of the symptoms of moral deterioration in his early days. He had seen the loose habits which had crept in in all quarters, he had seen the immoral sons of Eli, and how far the immorality had crept into the people when in the very precincts of the sacred place there was such immorality! But that was not all. Where there is a moral deterioration there is always a deterioration of the religious conception. And that is what Samuel had perceived, and therefore he realised that alike in religious thought and in social manners there needed a great reformation. Now there are a great many ways in which you bring about reformation. You may do it by legislation, you may do it by sending broadcast through the world the pressure and persuasion of men. Samuel chose the latter. He knew the only valuable reformation was a reformation which would strike the heart of the people. Watch him now as the statesman. There comes a change; there is inevitably a change in all human life. The development of national life, like the development of individual life, must go on. And this development must mean the passing away of things which are very dear. He showed us the example which will always be the example of wise men in eras of change. When you see a movement has become a movement of the people's thought do not be so unwise as to endeavour to withstand it, unless it be a question of right and wrong, but be wise and direct what you cannot oppose. That is the attitude of Samuel. If you watch him you see him, a man possessed of singular gifts, of great vigour in action, practical, with great insight into the causes which underlie national greatness, and at the same time with that marvellous flexibility that even in his old age he was ready to adjust himself to the new conditions of the life in which he found himself. II. SAMUEL'S TRAINING FOR SERVICE. If we take him as marked by these features of greatness, we ask, what was the source, what were the forces which came to the formation of a character so strong, so youthfully great. There are two things, surely, which make up the complete man in his later days. One is, of course, the surroundings of his early life, and the other is the character which was originally his. The dramatic interest of life surely lies in this, that you have the raw material of life exposed to certain influences in the home, in the early training of the school, and in the environment of the dawn of life. Watch the environing circumstances in the case of Samuel. No person who understands the influence of home life will, I think, be tempted to undervalue it. Do you not pity Samuel in the second stage of his life? The child who is suddenly withdrawn at a tender age from home and is planted down amidst surroundings which, I think, one may venture without disparagement to call unsympathetic. He could not find sympathy in the wild men who were leading the loose lives of Hophni and Phinehas, and Eli must have been but a grave companion for the young child, but as you watch him he somehow or other identifies himself with the quiet gravity of the old man. Watch him a step further. There comes a moment in which the third influence is seen. The first is home, the second is the general companionship, and the third is the silent influence of the unseen world come into his life. There comes a moment when he is aware that life does not consist merely in those factors of home life which he has known, nor in these various powers of official and national life of which he has had some youthful experience, but behind all activities of the human life there is the great presiding power of the unseen; and in the silent watches of the night there is disclosed to him a consciousness of the great power, the great formative spirit, the great influence of the Divine which is always at work in the hearts and lives of men. And now watch the character which is exposed to these influences. Is there any character in the Bible of which you may say, "The quiet piety of his life was like a growing thing?" There were no startling changes. There was the one solid change from the home into the sanctuary, but for the rest his days were bound each to each by natural piety. Quietly he ripened under the solemn and sweet influences of the sanctuary. III. THE RIPPENED CHARACTER. And now watch him in his later life, and see the

other characteristics. One would have imagined that this child who ripened under these circumstances would have been a person deficient in practical activity, deficient in those stronger and manlier virtues which we think can only be gained in the rude struggle of the more active life. But the man who has been brought up in this fashion had the qualities within him of that dogged determination and that entire devotion to duty which never stumbled at any duty, however arduous, and never shudders or shrinks from any danger; and, therefore, when he takes the reins of power what promptitude and what decision there is in all that he does! This is the man who, in the climax of his life, can show the one great solid quality which was, after all, the true characteristic of his life—the most complete and absolute disinterestedness. What are the conditions which we desire to see established in national life? If Samuel is to be an expression, or a type, or a teaching to us, then surely we want men who are absolutely free from self-interest. The danger of nations lies in self-interest. May I venture to say it without being misinterpreted?—this danger of self-interest in national affairs becomes much more dangerous as the complexity of life grows, and therefore the opportunities of manipulating affairs for personal interest begin to multiply upon us. What is the secret of having a disinterested mind? Jesus Christ was the supreme teacher, remember, and remember those words which He said, which we ought to write for ever in our hearts—I would emblazon them upon the walls of our Law Courts and our political assembly rooms—"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Is there any inspiration of single-mindedness, is there any way that we can get the power to rid ourselves of self-interest? The voice of God heard always, the voice of God in the still hours of the night. That which makes the difference between man and man lies in this: his relationship to God. And it was because Samuel had found God in his life so early that God was in his life all through, and wherever he stood it was God that he saw. How much may we not be warped by personal interests, by the desire of some gain, by the opportunities which so often in the hurly-burly of affairs come in temptations before us! What need there is that we in such hours should be, as Samuel would have the people, purged from our own offences, all our gods of covetousness and idolatry put far away, and standing once more as a people hearing the voice of God. (*W. Boyd Carpenter, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. I am now old and grey-headed.—*A good old age*:—A good old age has been cynically defined as "an age at which a man is good for nothing;" but it is our own fault if we are good for nothing in old age. The old can help the rising generation by sympathy and advice, and do much to prevent them from rising in the wrong direction. (*Quiver.*) *Age in the service of God*:—The late Mr. George Müller, of Bristol, sent this testimony as a message to Christian Endeavourers: "The joy of serving God increases with the multiplying years. I have never had more delight in the work of the Master than now, at the end of more than threescore years and ten. The richest blessings will be discovered in the path of service." *Beautiful old age*:—How beautiful it is to see a man, below whose feet time is crumbling away, holding firmly by the Lord whom he has loved and served all his days, and finding that the pillar of cloud, which guided him while he lived, begins to glow in its heart of fire as the shadows fall, and is a pillar of light to guide him when he comes to die. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A peaceful retrospect*:—The only life that bears being looked back upon is a life of Christian devotion and effort. It shows fairer when seen in the strange cross-lights that come when we stand on the boundary of two worlds—with "the white radiance of eternity" beginning to master the vulgar oil lamps of earth—than when seen by these alone. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 3–5. Behold, here I am, witness against me.—*Ad magistratum*:—A bold and just challenge of an old judge, made before all the people, upon his resignal of the government into the hands of a new king. In which words are observable both the matter and form of Samuel's challenge. We may observe concerning Samuel three things. First, his great forwardness in the business, in putting himself upon the trial by his own voluntary offer, before he was called thereunto by others. "Behold, here I am." Secondly, his great confidence, upon the conscience of his own integrity; in that he durst put himself upon his trial before God and the world. "Witness against me before the Lord, and before His Anointed." Thirdly, his great equity, in offering to make real

satisfaction to the full, in case anything should be justly proved against him in any of the premisses, " Whose ox, or whose ass, etc., and I will restore it you." I. SAMUEL ON SELF-TESTING VOLUNTARILY. We cannot marvel that Samuel should thus offer himself to the trial, when no man urged him to it; since there may be rendered so many congruous reasons for it. Especially being withal so conscious to himself, of having dealt uprightly, that he knew all the world could not touch him with any wilful violation of justice. He doth not therefore decline the trial, but seek it. The righteous are bold as a lion. The merchant that knoweth his wares to be faulty, is glad of the dark shop, and false light; whereas he that will uphold them right and good, willeth his customers to view them in the open sun. A corrupt magistrate or officer may sometimes set a face upon it, and in a kind of bravery bid defiance to all the world; but it is then when he is sure he hath power on his side to bear him out; when he is so backed with his great friends that no man dare once open his lips against him for fear of being shent. Even as a rank coward may take up the bucklers, and brave it like a stout champion, when he is sure the coast is clear and nobody near to enter the lists with him. And yet all this is but a mere flourish, a faint and feigned bravado; his heart the while is as cold as lead, and he meaneth nothing less than what he maketh show of. If the offer should be indeed accepted, and that his actions were like to be brought upon the public stage, there to receive a due and impartial bearing and doom; how would he then shrink and hold off trow ye? Be just then, fathers and brethren, and ye may be bold: so long as you stand right, you stand upon your own legs, and not at the mercy of others. But turn aside once to defrauding, oppressing, or receiving rewards, and you make yourselves slaves for ever. Possibly you may bear up, if the times favour you, and by your greatness out-face your crimes for a while: but that is not a thing to trust to. The wind and the tide may turn against you, when you little think it: and when once you begin to go down the wind, every base and busy companion will have one puff at you, to drive you the faster and farther down. Yet mistake not, as if I did exact from magistrates an absolute immunity from those common frailties and infirmities, whereunto the whole race of mankind is subject: the imposition were unreasonable. I doubt not but Samuel, notwithstanding all this great confidence in his own integrity, had yet among so many causes, as in so many years space had gone through his hands, sundry times erred in judgment, either in the substance or the sentence, or at least in some circumstances of the proceedings. By misinformations, or misapprehensions, or by other passions or prejudices, no doubt but he might be carried, and like enough sometimes was, to show either more lenity, or more rigour, than was in every respect expedient. But this is the thing that made him stand so clear, both in his own conscience and in the sight of God and the world, that he had not wittingly and purposely perverted judgment, nor done wrong to any man with an evil or corrupt intention. II. SAMUEL'S CONFIDENCE. See we next, what the things are he doth with so much confidence disclaim, as the matter of the challenge. It is in the general, injury or wrong: the particular kinds whereof in the text specified, are fraud, oppression, and bribery. Against all and every of these he expressly protesteth. It is verily nothing so much as our covetousness that maketh us unjust: which St. Paul affirmeth to be the root of all evil; but is most manifestly the root of this evil of injustice. But men that are resolved of their end (if this be their end, to make themselves great and rich howsoever) are not much moved with arguments of this nature. The evidence of God's Law, and conscience of their own duty, work little upon them: gain is the thing they look after; as for equity they little regard it. A man may seem to profit by them, and to come up wonderfully for a time; but time and experience show, that they moulder away again at the last, and crumble to nothing; and that for the most part within the compass of an age. What gained Ahab by it, when he made himself master of Naboth's vineyard, but the hastening of his own destruction? And what was Gehazi the better for the gifts he received from Naaman? which brought an hereditary leprosy with them? And what was Achan the richer for the golden wedge he had saved out of the spoils, and hidden in his tent, which brought destruction upon him and all that appertained to him? It ought to be the care of every private man, thus far to follow Samuel's example that he keep himself from doing any man wrong. But men that are in place of government, as Samuel was, have yet a further charge lying upon them, over and besides the former; and that is, to preserve others from wrong, and being wronged, to relieve

them to the utmost of their power. The more have they to answer for that abuse any part of this so sacred an ordinance, for the abetting, countenancing, or strengthening of any injurious act. They that have skill in the laws, by giving dangerous counsel in the chamber or pleading smoothly at the bar. They that attend about the courts, by keeping back just complaints, or doing other casts of their office in favour of an evil person or cause; but especially the magistrates themselves, by a perfunctory or partial hearing, by pressing the laws with rigour, or qualifying them with some mitigation where they ought not. Where others do wrong, if they know it, and can help it, their very connivance maketh them accessories; and then the greatness and eminency of their places enhanceth the crime yet further, and maketh them principals. 1. A very grievous thing it is to think of, but a thing merely impossible to reckon up (how much less then to remedy and reform?) all the several kinds of frauds and deceits that are used in the world. It is stark nought, saith the buyer: It is perfect good, saith the seller: when many times neither of both speaketh, either as he thinketh, or as the truth of the thing is. Blessed is the man, then, in whose heart, and tongue, and hands, there is found no deceit; that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness; and speaketh the truth from his heart; that hath not stretched his wits to hurt his neighbour; nor made advantage of any man's unskilfulness, simplicity or credulity, to gain from him wrongfully; that can stand upon it, as Samuel here doth, and his heart not give his tongue the lie, that he hath defrauded no man. 2. The other kind of injury, here next mentioned, is oppression: wherein a man maketh use of his power to the doing of wrong, as he did of his wits in defrauding. Which is for the most part the fault of rich and great men; because they have the greatest power so to do, and are not so easily resisted in what they will have done. Yet is it indeed a very grievous sin, forbidden by God himself in express terms (Lev. 25). If thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another: and so going on, concludeth, Ye shall not therefore oppress one another, but thou shalt fear thy God; implying that it is from want of the fear of God that men oppress one another. Solomon therefore saith, that he that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth (or despiseth) his Maker (Prov. 14). And, indeed, so he doth, more ways than one. First, he despiseth his Maker's commandment, who hath (as you heard) peremptorily forbidden him to oppress. Secondly, he despiseth his Maker's creature: the poor man whom he so oppresseth being God's workmanship as well as himself. Thirdly, he despiseth his Maker's example; who looketh upon the distresses of the poor and oppressed, to provide for them, and to relieve them. Fourthly, he despiseth his Master's ordinance; in perverting that power and wealth, which God lent him purposely to do good therewithal, and turning it to a quite contrary use, to the hurt and damage of others. And he that goeth on to reproach his Maker (without repentance) must needs do it to his own confusion. He that made him, can mar him when he pleaseth; and the greatest oppressors shall be no more able to stand before him then, than their poorer brethren are now able to stand out against them. But herein especially may you behold the baseness of oppression; that the basest people, men of the lowest rank and spirit, are evermore the most insolent, and consequently (according to the proportion of their power) the most oppressive. Solomon compareth a poor man, when he hath the opportunity to oppress another poor man, to a sweeping rain that leaveth no food (Prov. 28). How roughly did that servant in the parable deal with his fellow-servant, when he took him by the throat for a small debt, after his master had but newly remitted to him a sum incomparably greater? The reason of the difference was; the master dealt nobly, and freely, and like himself, and had compassion; but the servant, being of a low and narrow spirit, must insult. Conclude hence, all ye that are of generous births or spirits, how unworthy that practice would be in you, wherein men of the lowest minds and conditions can (in their proportion) not equal only, but even exceed you. Which should make you, not only to hate oppression, because it is wicked, but even to scorn it, because it is base, and to despise it. 3. There is yet a third behind, against which Samuel protesteth as a branch of injustice also; which also concerned him more properly as a judge; to wit, bribery. Bribery is properly a branch of oppression. For if the bribe be exacted, or but expected, yet so, as that there can be little hope of a favourable, or but so much as a fair hearing without it; then is it a manifest oppression in the receiver, because he maketh an advantage of that power, wherewith he is entrusted for the administration of justice, to his own

proper benefit, which ought not to be, and is clearly an oppression. But if it proceed rather from the voluntary offer of the giver, for the compassing of his own ends, then is it an oppression in him; because thereby he getteth an advantage in the favour of the court against his adversary, and to his prejudice. For, observe it, the general oppressors are ever the greatest bribers, and freest of their gifts to those that may bestead them in their suits. What is it to blind the eyes? Or, how can bribes do it? Justice is not unfitly portrayed in the form of a man with his right eye open, to look at the cause; and his left eye shut or muffled, that he may not look at the person. Now a gift putteth all this out of order, and setteth it the quite contrary way. It giveth the left eye liberty but too much, to look askint at the person; but putteth the right eye quite out, that it cannot discern the cause. Even as in the next fore-going chapter, Nahash the Ammonite would have covenanted with the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, upon condition he might thrust out all their right eyes. "From this property of hood-winking and muffling up the eyes it is that a bribe is in the Hebrew to cover, to dawb up, or to draw over with lime, plaster, or the like. Whereunto our English word, to cover, hath such near affinity in the sound that (were it not apparently taken from the French couvrir, and that from the Latin cooperire) it might with some probability be thought to owe its original to the Hebrew. But however it be for the word, the thing is clear enough: this copher doth so cover and plaster up the eyes, that they cannot see to do their office aright, and as they ought. III. Is SAMUEL'S EQUITRY, in offering, in case anything should be truly charged against him in any of the premisses, to make the wronged parties restitution, (Whose ox have I taken? etc. And I will restore it you.) Samuel was confident he had not wittingly done any man wrong, either by fraud, oppression of bribery; whereby he should be bound to make, or should need to offer restitution. A duty, in case of injury, most necessary, both for quieting the conscience within and to give satisfaction to the world; and for the more assurance of the truth and sincerity of our repentance in the fight of God for the wrongs we have done. Without which (at least in the desire and endeavour) there can be no true repentance for the sin. There is an enforced restitution, whereof perhaps Zophar speaketh in Job. 20. (That which he laboured for, he shall restore, and not swallow it down; according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein); and such as the law imposed upon thefts, and other manifest wrongs; which although not much worth, is yet better than none. But as Samuel's offer here was voluntary: so it is the voluntary restitution that best pleaseth God, pacifieth the conscience, and in some measure satisfieth the world. Such was that of Zaccheus (Luke 19). It may be feared, if every officer that hath to do in or about the Courts of Justice, should be tied to that proportion, many one would have but a very small surplussage remaining, whereout to bestow the one moiety to pious uses, as Zaccheus there did. There is scarce any one point in the whole body of moral divinity, that soundeth so harsh to the ear, or reliseth so harsh in the palate of a worldling, as that of restitution doth. To such a man this is indeed a hard, very hard saying; yet as hard as it seemeth to be, it is full of reason and equity. Whole volumes have been written of this subject; and the casuists are large in their discourses thereof. But for one thing itself in general, this much is clear from the Judicial Law of God, given by Moses to the people of Israel; from the letter whereof, though Christians be free (positive laws binding none but those to whom they were given), yet the equity thereof still bindeth us as a branch of the unchangeable Laws of Nature. That whosoever shall have wronged his neighbour in anything committed to his custody, or in fellowship, or in anything taken away by violence, or by fraud, or in detaining any found thing, or the like, is bound to restore it; and that in integrum, to the utmost farthing of what he hath taken, if he be able. Not so only, but beside the principal, to offer some little overplus also by way of compensation for the damage; if at least the wronged party have sustained any damage thereby, and unless he shall be willing freely to remit it. The Lord give us all hearts to do that which is equal and right, and in all our dealings with others, to have evermore the fear of God before our eyes; knowing that of the Lord, the righteous Judge, we shall in our souls receive at the last great assize according to that we have done in our bodies here, whether it be good or evil. (*Bishop Sanderson.*) *Lessons from the life of Samuel*:—I. THE PUBLIC SCENES of a NOBLE LIFE. A man's life of outward relationships naturally divides into three parts, but there are not fresh and interesting scenes in each part of

every man's life. There were in Samuel's. Take 1. Samuel's relation to the social life of his childhood. Eli's rule was weak. It has been beautifully said that in this case the ivy supported the feeble tottering wall—the child Samuel was the stay of aged Eli. Samuel was the only one there who was in real harmony with God's holy house. He was a living witness in the world for God, even as a child. 2. Samuel's relation to the social life of his manhood. Judges were in part patriotic deliverers and in part civil rulers. In Samuel's life there is one great military scene, that with which the word "Eben ezer" is associated; but his chief work was magistracy and moral influence. In his time the nation was outgrowing the mode of government by temporary and uncertain judgeships; the way was preparing for fixed and hereditary rulers. We may think of him as saying with King Arthur—

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

3. Samuel's relation to the social life of his older age. Then came the demand for a hereditary sovereign. And this demand Samuel had to meet, and the Divine response to it he was called to arrange. The position as viewed by Samuel was this,—If Israel was to be a common nation, developing an ordinary civilisation, it would be better for them to have a king, a court, a stated army, and national alliances. But if Israel was to be a special nation, called of God to the supremely high, honourable, unique work of conserving for the world the foundation truths of the Divine revelation, they must be willing to give up what men call civilisation, and keep the separateness and directness of the Divine rule, the theocracy. Alas! they were weak in faith in those days. They chose the lesser good. Samuel became the prophet of the new kingdom; and prophets—or persons in direct relations with Jehovah—were specially needed when the hereditary idea of kingship was destroying the prevailing idea of immediacy of Divine rule.

II. THE PRIVATE SOURCES OF THE NOBILITY OF THIS LIFE. We note in Samuel—
1. A pure and beautiful childhood. There have been cases in which men of power have come up out of a wild and wayward childhood—Augustine, Loyola, John Newton, etc. But these are exceptions. The rule is, that the world's great benefactors grew out of a lovely, gracious, and godly childhood. 2. The spirit of self-abnegation. 3. Force of character. Illustrated in his later interviews with Saul; in the severity of his carrying out the Jehovah-judgment on Agag; in the influence he gained with the people; and in the scene at his death. 4. Power of prevailing prayer. He was pre-eminently an interceder. 5. Continuity of goodness—the usual feature marking the life of men whose conversion is a growth rather than a sudden change. The quietly converted usually have a patient, persistent influence for good, along with breadth of view, and readiness to see truth and goodness in others. Samuel's great power lay in this direction. In Samuel's case we have this supremely beautiful thing, a whole life for God. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *Retrospect of public life*:—There are two great aspects of human character—that which is manifest to the all-seeing eye of God, and that which is seen by men,—both of which are of great importance to every one. It is too common to attend chiefly to the opinion of men, and many who obtain respect from their contemporaries are devoid of the favour of God. But all those who live in the fear of the Most High, seek to maintain a constant character among men. From such motives as these some of the most notable personages of Holy Scripture, ere they laid down their offices, or slept with their fathers, reviewed their whole public career before the people, and challenged accusation if any wrong were manifest. Thus Moses, in the last of his books, gives the retrospect which he spake to the children of Israel, and in which we find this solemn appeal, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." Thus also his illustrious successor, Joshua, finished his public life, and left Israel under a solemn obligation to continue in the way wherein he had led them. Thus also St. Paul, when he was about to part with the Ephesian elders, recapitulated his self-denying labours, declared that he was free from the blood of all men, charged them to keep the faith, and received from their tears and affectionate embraces testimony to his zeal for God and his love to them. He had spent his manhood in a struggle to reform the Church and rekindle

patriotism. He referred to his sons to show that he claimed no hereditary right to rule, and no indulgence to their guilt. He would not screen them. He was too much concerned for the glory of God and the good of Israel, to permit any personal or relative matter to stand in the way of righteous judgment. No Roman Brutus could feel more self-denial in his patriotism than Samuel in that love for truth and justice which the fear of God imparted to his character. He would not wish respect for him to hide the scandal which his sons had caused. Eli had his family wrecked by neglect of discipline. We are not told that Samuel sinned after the same manner, nor can we suppose it. We have reason to hope that his sons improved under his correction, for we find the next generation among the most godly of their day. Heman, one of the chief singers, and himself the author of some psalms of very deep spiritual experience, was the grandson of Samuel. Samuel was a most notable example, and he was preserved throughout a long period of gross corruption and religious backsliding. Obadiah was another, and the grace of God flourished in his soul, and led to sacrifice for the Lord's sake, though he lived in Ahab's godless household and near the wicked Jezebel. Joseph did so, and he was enabled to be faithful amidst temptations to lust, in prison, and in a place of dignity among an idolatrous people. It is good to make an early choice. The course in which it leads you brings no regrets because of your decision. If you would not be afraid of the scrutiny and condemnation of the world, when about to leave it, you must begin and act upon the principle of maintaining a good conscience, and of doing to others as ye would that they should do to you. This was Samuel's aim, and hence his spotless reputation. His life is both an example and a rebuke. 1. It is an example. To stand forth and make so successful an appeal must have presented to Saul an illustrious example of personal excellence, and of public probity. He thus saw that it was possible to live in high places, and be a righteous man; to administer the state, and retain integrity; to direct the concerns of millions, and receive their spontaneous and unanimous approval—truths which few governors have ever found. He saw that what had been done by one man might be done again by another. Such a specimen of fidelity could not fail to impress his mind. It taught him what the people would expect, and what he should do. It had been well for Saul had he followed so beautiful and righteous an example. Samuel was also an example to the whole people. If there be anything which can recommend the religion of the Bible, surely a consistent example of its living union with an active and public life ought to do so. This we have in a most striking form before us in Samuel. It declares that godliness never blunts, but sharpens the intellect; never destroys, but regulates studies or business; never hinders, but promotes well-being; never narrows, but expands benevolence. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 2. It is a rebuke. (*R. Steel.*) *Samuel's consistency*:—Samuel knew that he might tell his grief to the God of all comfort. Such acts of prayer are the soul's noble confessions of weakness, self-distrust, and self-surrender; but like the turning of the flower to the light, they are its equally noble efforts after strength, fulness of life, and power. In Samuel's private, personal prayers there is one fact that is specially noteworthy; and that is their consistence with his public life and duty. For it does not always follow from a man having to pray in public and offer to God the desires of others that he will as certainly, and fully, and reverently pray in private, and turn to God with his own need and trial. Every man is in danger of professionalism, especially in sacred things; and one form of its occurrence is in the possibility that the intercedings at the bedside of the sick, or in public service, may lead to forgetfulness of private intercourse with God. They are truly blessed souls who, the more frequently they are called to speak to others for God and pray to God for their fellows, are able also to preserve freshness and continuousness of personal life with God in prayer. Such a man was Samuel. The same noble and consistent trust in God, and prayer to God, marks the aged prophet, when, Saul having been chosen and anointed king, and having beaten Nahash the Ammonite, the people assembled at Gilgal for the renewal of the kingdom, as it was called. To Saul and the people renewing the kingdom meant jubilation, shouting, and sword-brandishing, as much as anything else. To Samuel it meant the re-affirming of their sinfulness, the re-assertion of God's supremacy, and the solemn declaration that their new and jubilant king was as much under the law and power of God as the meanest peasant that hung on the skirts of the army. See how

Samuel dealt with them. 1. First of all, though rejected by them, he challenged judgment on his own life. And this was in order to show the unfitness, the unfairness of the occasion that they had seized for rejecting the Lord his God. It was well for the Jews in after times to be reminded that if, in Samuel's time, there had not been so much fighting and military pageantry as in David's reign, nor so much taxation and kingly show as in Solomon's, nor so much devil worship as in the ceaseless wars and ambition of subsequent kings, yet there had been justice, and judgment, and knowledge, and some little approach to the fear of the Lord. Such rulers and such governments have been rarities and curiosities ever since. But Samuel went farther than challenging judgment on his public life. He offered to restore if anyone had been wronged by him. Most of us are capable of the sentiment of penitence, regret, shame for wrong doing; especially when detected. Many of us say, I will do so no more; but the number fines off into a very small one of those who live to restore to God or man the loss by wrong done or right withheld. Deeper still may be put the probe into our hearts when we think of Paul's farewell to his friends: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." The men who occupy the space in history that Samuel and Paul take up, and of whom such things can be said, are to be remembered more vividly than they have been for such excellencies. Think of the few great honest men of God that have had power over nations, especially those whose names are in this Book; and remember that while none of us can expect to have much success and admiration among men, yet all of us, even the lowliest and the simplest, may be like Samuel and Paul; all of us may be approved of God; all of us may be honest men of God. Think of the men who have occupied public stations with unselfishness and uncovetousness, and honoured it chiefly by integrity and holiness; and let the popular idols fall before your heavenly desire and purpose to be like such men. 2. The next thing that Samuel did was to rehearse the historic goodness of God to them. Though the illustrations of the same truth may not have been so vividly traced in other histories, yet we need to learn and remember that the principles which may be found in Samuel's words are of world-wide significance. There may not be chosen people now as Israel was then; though, perhaps, if we knew the purposes of God, we might see as much of calling and election among nations as in the olden time. History, as now slowly working itself towards solemn changes among the nations, witnesses abundantly to faith that, as with ancient Israel, so now, God gives no abiding to iniquity among peoples and communities; but that His wrath abides on those who take hands with the wicked, and identify their welfare with the vile of the earth. 3. When Samuel recounted God's goodness to the Hebrews it involved him in the reassertion of their wickedness. And this he accompanied with a prayer to God, who in answer sent thunder in the midst of wheat harvest, and terrified the sinful nation. Would that God would thunder now when nations do wrong and rulers sin unchecked! It is not for lack of sin that the heavens are silent; and the earth is blood-stained enough to bring more than thunderous voices from heaven to stay the follies and miseries of reckless men. Perhaps God's people, it may be Christ's Church, is not praying enough; that the eyes of His covenanted ones are not towards Him for these things; that Christian faith and longings are running in shallow selfish grooves, or round little rings of merely local and personal desire, instead of believing and hoping in Him as the God of all nations and families. With deeper necessities and wider knowledge than ancient Israel, we, at least, might take the spirit of Isaiah's word, and say to one another in these days of fear and foreboding, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest till He establish" the nations, and make all lands a praise in the earth. 4. Samuel's answer to this is one of the tenderest things that ever fell from the lips of man. He counselled them to serve the Lord, and promised them his continued prayers. The almost womanlike tenderness of Samuel to the erring people is seen in his answer to their call for his prayers: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: I will teach you the good and right way." If he could not judge them, he could pray for them; if he could not rule, he could teach. Yet he did not say this to please and soothe them. It would have been sin against the Lord to do otherwise. A man's Divine work, a prophet's vocation, a Christian's duty is not altered by the rejection or the petition of men. He is the Lord's servant; whether men will bear or forbear, whether men approve or not, his duties and privileges are too solemn for him to take them up or lay them

down at the voice of man. Samuel would still teach, though they forgot his word: he would still pray, for it was God's will. He did not give them up in shame and sadness: he prayed and taught the more. Is not this altogether worthy in him? Is he not to be admired? But do not the like duties press on us? Are there not times in all our lives when we smart from undeserved injury, or fret over unwarranted neglect and despotism? If at such times we but silenced our self-conscious complaints, we might hear a voice calling us to as august and noble an act as Samuel's. (*G. B. Ryley.*) *Justice unborn*:—Israel never had a judge like Hannah's son. Josephus says that Samuel had an "inborn love of justice." And so he had. Some men still both in public and in private life have that same love of justice born in them. And they are happy men, and all men are happy who have to do with them. Some other men, again, most men indeed, have an inborn love of injustice that they have to fight against all their days. The golden rule is written as if with nature's own finger, on some men's hearts; while other men are never able all their days to learn that rule. Samuel was still "The Seer" as he sat on the judgment seat; but there was nothing enthusiastic, carried-away, or impracticable about Samuel. He was a clear-eyed, firm-handed, sure-footed, resolute-minded, righteous man, with an inborn sense of truth and righteousness; and all his opinions, and decisions, and sentences carried all men's consent and conscience with them. In ancient Rome they used to put on a white robe when they went out to ask for the votes of the voters, and it was for this that they were called "candidates" in the language of Rome; clean men, that is, in our language. But it was only one famous name here and another famous name there that came out of office as clean as they entered it. Look at Samuel laying down his office, and putting on his snow-white mantle. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*)

Vers. 6—25. **And Samuel said unto the people.**—*Samuel's dealings with the people*:—Having vindicated himself (in the first five verses of this chapter), Samuel now proceeds to his second point, and takes the people in hand. But before proceeding to close quarters with them, he gives a brief review of the history of the nation, in order to bring out the precise relation in which they stood to God, and the duty resulting from that relation (vers. 6-12). 1. First, he brings out the fundamental fact of their history. Its grand feature was this: "It is the Lord who advanced Moses and Aaron, and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt." The fact could not be disputed—their existence as a people and their settlement in Canaan were due to the special mercy of the Lord. And yet there was a want of cordiality on the part of the people in acknowledging it. They were partly at least blind to its surpassing lustre. "How strange it is," Richard Baxter says in substance somewhere, "that men can see beauty in so many things—in the flowers, in the sky, in the sun—and yet be blind to the highest beauty of all, the fountain and essence of all beauty, the beauty of the Lord!" Having emphatically laid down the fundamental fact in the history of Israel, Samuel next proceeds to reason upon it. The reasoning rests on two classes of facts: the first, that whenever the people forsook God they had been brought into trouble; the second, that whenever they repented and cried to God He delivered them out of their trouble. Now, what was it that had recently occurred? They had had trouble from the Ammonites. Now, from what Samuel says here, it would appear that this annoyance from the Ammonites was the immediate occasion of the people wishing to have a king. Here let us observe what their natural course would have been, in accordance with former precedent. It would have been to cry to the Lord to deliver them from the Ammonites. But instead of that they asked Samuel to give them a king, that he might deliver them. You see from this what cause Samuel had to charge them with rejecting God for their King. You see at the same time how much forbearance God exercised in allowing Samuel to grant their request. 2. Samuel is specially concerned to press on the people; and this he does in the remaining verses (vers. 13-25), that they were to remember that their having a king in no sense and in no degree exempted them from their moral and spiritual obligations to God. He would show them there and then, under their very eyes, what agencies of destruction God held in His hand, and how easily He could bring these to bear on them and on their property. Oh, what folly it was to offer an affront to the great God, who had such complete control over "fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind fulfilling His word"! What blindness to think they could in any

respect be better with another king! Thus it is that in their times of trial God's people in all ages have been brought to feel their entire dependence on Him.

3. But now, the humble and contrite spirit having been shown by the people, see how Samuel hastens to comfort and reassure them. Now that they have begun to fear, he can say to them, "Fear not." Now that they have shown themselves alive to the evils of God's displeasure, they are assured that there is a clear way of escape from these evils. Samuel, moreover, reminds them that it was not they that had chosen God; it was God that had chosen them. "The Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people." This was a great ground of comfort for Israel.

4. Once more, in answer to the people's request that he would intercede for them, Samuel is very earnest. "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." The great emphasis with which he says this shows how much his heart is in it. "What should I do, if I had not the privilege of intercessory prayer for you?" There is a wonderful revelation of love to the people here. "I bless God," said Mr. Flavel, one of the best and sweetest of the old Puritan divines, on the death of his father—"I bless God for a religious and tender father, who often poured out his soul to God for me; and this stock of prayers I esteem the fairest inheritance on earth." How many a man has been deeply impressed even by the very thought that some one was praying for him! "Is it not strange," he has said to himself, "that he should pray for me far more than I pray for myself? What can induce him to take such an interest in me?" Every Christian ought to think much of intercessory prayer, and practise it greatly. Think how Moses interceded for the whole nation after the golden calf, and it was spared. Think how Daniel interceded for his companions in Babylon, and the spirit was revealed to him. Think how Elijah interceded for the widow, and her son was restored to life. Think how Paul constantly interceded for all his Churches, and how their growth and spiritual prosperity evinced that his prayer was not in vain. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. Which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt.—God's leading:—A child might say to a geographer: "You talk about the earth being round! Look on this great crag; look on that deep dell; look on yonder great mountain, and the valley at its feet, and yet you talk about the earth being round." . . . The geographer's view is comprehensive; he does not look at the surface of the world in mere detail; he does not deal with inches and feet and yards; he sees a larger world than the child has had time to grasp. . . . And so it is with God's wonderful dealings with us: there are great rocks and barren deserts, deep, dank, dark pits and defiles, and glens and dells, rugged places that we cannot smooth over at all, and yet when He comes to say to us at the end of the journey, "Now, look back; there is the way that I have brought you," we shall be enabled to say, "Thou hast gone before us, and made our way straight."

Vers. 9—15. And when they forgot the Lord their God he sold them into the hand of Sisera.—*National judgments the consequence of national sins:*—Let us learn from this transaction the important lesson, that national judgments are the certain consequences of national transgression! A lesson, taught not merely in this particular passage of Jewish history, but written in characters the most legible upon every period of their national career—a truth, for the confirmation of which we need not search the annals of other countries; we have merely to look back to the past experience of our own. Yes, whatever be the instrument to which the Almighty may see fit to entrust the execution of His vengeance; whether it be the sword, or the famine, or the pestilence, or the far more terrible scourge of popular fury and civil discord; whether He raise up a tyrant to oppress His people, and grievously afflict them with a rod of iron; whatever may be the means employed to inflict the chastisement, the occasion of that chastisement is sin. The same spirit is at work among us,—the self-willed spirit of insubordination,—the spirit of opposition to all constituted authority—of dissatisfaction with all long established institutions. The same principles are broached among us; principles which, if carried out to their legitimate conclusions, must lead inevitably to the same miserable results. Now, as in those days, the "majesty of the people" is held to be the only true source of power; the will of the multitude is substituted for the authority of God!

Surely, when we see these things come to pass, there can be nothing very unreasonable in the fear that trouble may be hard at hand; that the day of calamity may be nearer than we are willing to believe? Should the Almighty "deal with us after our sins, and reward us according to our iniquities," (Ps. ciii. 10), the issue may be easily foreseen. Did the transgression of our fathers draw down upon them the calamities which we this day deplore, and are we better than they? No! in nowise. Our privileges, indeed, are greater—our deliverances have been greater—our responsibilities are greater—let us beware lest our condemnation, also, be greater. (*W. Brickwell.*) *Unheeding warnings prepare for judgment*:—"Things to which," says Manton, "we are used do not work upon us; we are not much moved with them. Custom maketh men sleep quietly by the falls of great waters, where much noise is; and some parts of the body grow callous, brawny, dry, and dead, as the labourer's hand, and the traveller's heel, by much use." So doth the conscience gradually lose its force. At first, like a cataract, its great roar astounds the soul, and effectually prevents its slumbers of carnal security; but by-and-bye its noise is scarcely heard, and men are even lulled to sleep by its sound. Now this is to be dreaded exceedingly, for it is the forerunner of doom. No more warnings are heard because sentence has gone forth and the man's destruction is sealed.

Vers. 13—25. **Now, therefore, behold the king whom ye have chosen.**—*Samuel's farewell address*:—I. One could hardly fail to note what is here taught respecting **THE CONDITION OF TRUE PROSPERITY**. Samuel plainly tells people that, in gaining their desire, they had not made sure of blessing. It still remained that they must fear and serve the Lord. Refusing to do this, His hand would be against them. In early times, when man was in his childhood, it was needful that God should make Himself and His will known chiefly through temporal blessings. To fidelity He promised present benefit; against transgression he denounced present ills. Now, it is clear that God does not deal with us in just this way. From the first He sought to lead a sinning race out into the knowledge and enjoyment of a larger life. He would lead them on to see that there is a better than merely outward and earthly good. Less and less, therefore, did he connect temporal prosperity with obedience. Here, then, is the true good; in the smile of God, communion with Him, His present keeping and guidance, and heirship to an inheritance spiritual and eternal. This, with just such admixture of earthly honour and treasure as seems to God best, is true prosperity. When God would greatly bless, it is in ways like these. Does it need, now, to be greatly insisted that this is conditioned, still and forever, on the fear of God and faithful keeping of His commands? There are those who seem not to see it. Many, apparently, imagine that the present and future smile and favour of God come alike to all; not in gracious offer only, but in actual possession. They rather resent the suggestion that it can make any essential difference. But this is practical atheism—call it by whatever pleasing name we will. Then there is a class who seem to fancy that the requirement of obedience as a condition of present and future good is **done** away, for us at least, by the gospel promise of gratuitous pardon and free grace. This, too, is a fatal mistake. The seemingly two ways, of Samuel and of Christ, are not two, but one. Never was an Old Testament saint saved by the merit of his works. He, too, came into God's spiritual household by undeserving favour. But he did not come bringing disobedience and self-will along with him. He came to love, trust, serve, and obey. So does the returning soul now come. And, coming with any other spirit, God cannot give him approving welcome. Now and forever, here and hereafter, true blessing is conditioned upon our walking in God's way. II. It will repay us to note the light which this Scripture sheds upon **THE USE OF WONDERS AND SIGNS**. To confirm the words he had spoken, Samuel makes his appeal to God. He asks a sign from heaven, and his request is granted: "The Lord sent thunder and rain that day." Robinson, in his *Palestine*, says: "In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October and November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene." Jerome, whose home was in that land, tells us, "I have never seen rain in Judea in the end of June or in July." The fulfilment of Samuel's prediction was thus a wonder and a sign. Now, supposing there is sufficient need of them, nothing is more natural than expectation of such signs from heaven. But that wonders and signs may be at any particular time probable there must be an adequate occasion for them. The end to be accomplished must

be worthy, and other and ordinary means inadequate to it. It must be clear that the signs will do what the ordinary means can not. There was such adequate occasion when the book of Revelation was incomplete. It is not certain that there is now, at any time with us, a similar need; and our Saviour, whose wonders were so many and so stupendous, declared that, in response to idle curiosity or unbelieving demand, "no sign shall be given." Of such, "They have Moses and the prophets, the written gospel and the Divine spirit: if they hear not them, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." III. It is worth our while to note briefly the hint we here have of **THE REAL ESTIMATE IN WHICH THE WORLDLY MAN HOLDS THE UNGODLY**. Upon the latter the former sometimes turns his back with not a little seeming scorn. So, in a measure, Israel had done with Samuel. They wanted a more stately rule. But now, no sooner is the sense of their sin and of God's ready resources of judgment brought home to them than they are glad to get, as we say, under His wing. IV. In this scripture there are impressive reminders of **THE GREAT AND MULTIPLIED INCENTIVES WHICH WANDERERS HAVE TO RETURN TO GOD**. Why does Samuel remind the people that right relations with God are the condition of true prosperity, save that he may persuade them to return to Him? And why does he make use of the startling sign from heaven but to the same end? What an array of incentives! Surely, if we fail to find God and the blessing He would bestow, the fault cannot be that of Him who sets before us motives so numerous and so great. V. There is an important intimation running all through these words as to **WHAT IT IS WHICH MAKES ONE TRULY AND SAVINGLY RELIGIOUS**. Upon this point there would seem to be among men a great and strange variety of opinions. Some seem to suppose that religion mainly consists in knowing and holding the truth, or in soundness of intellectual belief; others have thought that he is a sufficiently religious person who reads his Bible, and says his prayers, and goes to his church, and pays his share for its support; there are those who make chief account of warm and ardent religious emotions, and think it enough to delight in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; just now there is a considerable class who would have us understand that religion is summed up in what is termed a good life—in practical reverence for honesty, charity, truth, neighbourly kindness, and kindred virtues. But now the thought which underlies all of Samuel's words is different from anything here named. What he implies is that true, acceptable, saving religion consists in a right personal relation to a personal God. This does not mean that any one of the things enumerated is worthless, unimportant. Each is an important help to it, or expression or fruit of it. But never are they anywhere in the Scripture set forth as the very thing itself; as that central reality whence all its deep blessedness flows, and in which its reasonableness consists. He is a truly religious man who is in a right personal relation to a personal God. VI. This address, as a whole, gives us a pleasing glimpse of **THE BEAUTY AND POWER OF UNSELFISH PIETY**. His own were the hands that anointed his successor. To those who have cast him off he pledges his unceasing prayers and gives his cheerful help. In all this there was rare magnanimity. Some good men have fallen greatly below it. Have we not heard of Gospel ministers who, when rightly or wrongly dismissed from their charge, have spoken harsh words and gone out with a resentful spirit? and of Sunday school superintendents, chief singers, and other helpers, who, because another has been put in their place or because disparaging words have been spoken concerning them, have altogether withdrawn from Christian work? This is simply because to step down and out from a place of influence and honour, to see the crown of favour transferred to the head of another, is never easy. To do it patiently takes great grace. Yet it is not impossible. We have witnessed it in ministers and church officials, who have proved just as constant and ardent in the ranks as at the head; in following as when they led. The beauty of such a spirit never fails of recognition. Such men are everywhere beloved. (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

Ver. 14. Continue following the Lord your God.—*Continuity in service*:—It has been said that one reason (perhaps the chief one) why the late Emperor of Brazil was dethroned by his own subjects, was because he was a man of peaceful pursuits and tastes, fond of literature, science and art, and the society of learned men. Hence his government was too tame for his people. There was not enough of the Napoleonic spirit about him, not enough glitter and show, and martial array and warrior spirit, as if the chief end of a king was to assume a

fighting attitude, and challenge everybody to mortal combat. The man, be he sovereign or subject, who labours in such peaceful pursuits as tend to develop the intelligence and material resources of a country, is a far greater benefactor of the race than all the despots who have ever cursed the world with their combative-ness. But people sometimes, in their mad frenzy and folly, drive away their best advisers, or commit the blunder of selling their friends and buying their enemies. The clamour for a king showed deep ingratitude to Samuel, after all he had done for them, and all the evils he had saved them from. But "Memory soon, of service done, deserteth the ingrate." They had a pretext, it is true, in the bad conduct of Samuel's sons, and of this they failed not to take advantage. But Samuel had not himself abdicated the office of Judge, though his sons were associated with him as helpers. There was also in their demand a spirit of rebellion against the order of governors God Himself had set over them, and a spirit of inordinate ambition and pride in desiring to be like the rest of the nations round about them. Having equipped the vessel of the State, and arranged and settled the new form of government, he assembled all the people at Gilgal, that he might give them some counsels, cautions, and warnings as to the future. He reminds them of his own past career amongst them from his childhood. This was a glorious testimony to the justice, integrity, and humanity of the prophet's rule. Happy the ruler, by whatever name he may be called, king, emperor, or president, about whom such testimony can be borne, and happy the people, if they only knew it, who are blest with such rulers. King and people had now entered on a new career under the most favourable auspices, and what they needed most was the spirit of continuity—"Continue following the Lord your God." That is a beautiful prayer, in which we desire that all our works may be "begun, continued, and ended" in God, that thus living, and walking, and working, we may glorify His holy name, and finally by His mercy obtain everlasting life. It is not enough—though it is something—to begin well. We must continue and advance, and "not be wearied in well-doing." Sometimes a year or a day is well begun, and people resolve to "amend their lives," and determine to turn over a new page in life's book. Like the Galatians, they "run well" for a while. Continuity, or perseverance in human affairs is one great secret of success. Let the motto of the German soldier be yours, *Inner vorwärts* (ever forward). The influence of birth, fortune, and patronage sinks into insignificance, compared with enthusiasm, diligence, and perseverance. Inducements to evil there will be in plenty. The devil, the father of evil, will ply all his arts to succeed in our overthrow. Let us always be ready and prepared for him. "For some days past," said an eminent servant of God, "I have been unusually harassed by temptations of various kinds, and am often led to inquire, 'Why am I thus?'" So it is still: the Christian soldier is not only drilled and equipped, he is also placed in the field, and his qualities tried. Man's duty is simply to do as God tells him, neither adding to nor diminishing the Divine rule. But, in our ignorance and blindness, and presumption, we are for superseding or improving God's plan. It is not the high enterprise He desires, so much as the quiet continuance in well-doing. Many of us would rather choose to climb the mountain side than plod along, steadily and wearily, miles of level road. Many would be willing, no doubt, to serve Him if they only might do it in their own way. But the thing God requires most of us all is to have no will but His. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." This is but an expansion by the Saviour of the warning advice of Samuel. (*J. Reid.*) *Persistent following after the Lord*:—Let those tempted to depart from the Lord remember the answer of Christian to Apollyon, when the latter sought to persuade him to turn back, and forsake his Lord: "O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak truth, I like his service, his wages, his servants, his government, his company, and country, better than thine; and, therefore, leave off to persuade me further: I am his servant, and I will follow him."

Vers. 17, 18. I will call unto the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain.—*The power of prayer*:—The evidence of history to the truth is most invaluable. It makes an appeal to the judgment which can be readily appreciated, and, next to experience, is one of the most convincing demonstrations of the divinity of the Scriptures. History may teach lessons of wisdom by its striking examples, but personal experience is essential to the awakening of the soul. This was what Samuel sought. 1. How near to God he seemed to live! He was always in Divine communion, and possessed the ear of the Almighty Father. He

prayed, and the answer thundered through the air and deluged the ground. He spoke to men as the viceregent of God, and the people trembled in his presence. But his nearness to God was not so close as is the privilege of the humblest believer in New Testament times. 2. How powerful is prayer! This was Samuel's greatness. His intimacy with God was fully used in prayer. It was his highest means of doing good. The outer effort had the inner prayer. His labour among men was implemented by his wrestling with God. Prayer was the secret of his strength and of his happiness. Prayer is still powerful. It is receiving illustrations in our own day on a scale of grandeur and extent not equalled in any age of the Church. People have believed in the power of prayer, have felt its necessity and its efficacy. Conversions have been more largely the result of prayer than of preaching. Thus John Newton wrote in his journal: "About this time I began to know that there is a God who hears and answers prayer." Prayer is the strength of your soul, for it takes hold of God. Samuel's word to the people was with power. It was not until this special witness from God awakened them that they confessed, "We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." It is striking how long sin can remain upon a comparatively enlightened conscience without causing fear. But when the guilt is felt, compunction is often more agonizing than that which the sharp arrows of a first awakening produce. 3. They now sought Samuel's intercession. They knew him to be a man of prayer, and intensely concerned in their spiritual good. They therefore sought his aid in their distress. It is true that many have wished the intercession of the godly, without any personal desire to seek God:—as Pharaoh, when he entreated Moses to pray on his behalf; and as Simon Magus, when he asked St. Peter to plead that the evil threatened against him might not come; and as those who, fearing death to be near, attach a saving value to the prayers of the godly, whose counsels they had been despising. But though such may not receive a benefit from prayers offered by proxy, the prayers of a righteous man avail much in behalf of the awakened sinner. If you know the power of prayer, you cannot, without guilt, cease to intercede on behalf of your friends, acquaintances, and others. Is this intercession, a feature of your personal religion? It is specially important that anxious souls should seek the prayers of the people of God. God has pledged his word to receive the returning sinner, the repenting prodigal, the trembling backslider. "The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people." Thus Samuel reasoned with the children of Israel in their distress of soul. Thus did the faithful Samuel seek the spiritual conviction of the people. It was by declaring the truth, and abounding in prayer. Apart from the miraculous, this is the constant means of blessing attached to the ministry still. (*R. Steel.*) *Thunder and rain at the prayer of Samuel*:—I. THAT THIS INCIDENT WAS A MIRACLE IS EVIDENT. This instance is a parallel to that which occurred in Egypt (Exod. ix. 23). It is to be remarked that Samuel spoke confidently as to the issue of his prayer, "The Lord shall send." etc. 2. Because the thunder and rain came at a season of the year in which, in the natural course of things, they are never heard or seen in Canaan. "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" The time of harvest in this country is often a time of much thunder and rain, but this is not the case in the land where this miracle was wrought. 3. The effect of the storm upon the minds of those who witnessed it was such as to make it evident that they regarded it as a supernatural manifestation. II. THE INTENTION OF THE MIRACLE. It was sent as an attestation of the blamelessness of Samuel's administration as judge of Israel. It was at the same time a token of God's displeasure at Israel's present wilfulness. Samuel's expressions of displeasure were thus shown to be a message to them from the God whose rule they had treated so lightly. Lessons:—1. Whenever a nation rejects God, such rejection will be followed by signs of God's displeasure. 2. The continuance of a nation's greatness depends upon the relation of individual members of it to the Living God. The beauty of the garden depends upon each flower being placed in right relations to the light. 3. The servants of God sin against Him when they neglect to pray for their fellow countrymen (v. 23). We should pray for them—1. Because they are our fellow creatures (1 Tim. ii. 1). 2. Because, as a body politic, we have an interest in their right relations to God (1 Cor. xii. 26). 3. Because national love ought to be an element in every Christian's character (Rom. x. 1). (*Outlines from Sermons by a London minister.*) *Prayer for favourable weather*:—I. THAT UNFAVOURABLE WEATHER IS SOMETIMES SENT BY GOD IN PROOF OF HIS DISPLEASURE. On the occasion before us it is distinctly

stated to have been so; this happened again and again in the history of Israel. The prophet Amos refers to this. (Amos iv. 6, 8). And we all call to mind the terrible drought which happened to the kingdom of Israel during the reign of the wicked Ahab, when for the space of "three years and six months it rained not." Now, before we begin to ask God to send us favourable weather, and to revive our trade, would it not be well for us to ask ourselves whether we have done anything as a nation justly to merit judgment at the hands of God? We are accustomed to talk about our country as a "Christian country." Is it really so? If so, what are the evidences of its being so? Listen to what God says by His prophet on this matter to ancient Israel. (Isaiah i. 11—16.) In other words, the national religion that God demands is a religion founded on righteousness or right doing. Judged by this test, surely there is abundant room for the inquiry whether, as a nation, we have not deserved God's judgments. For instance, look at the social vices which are rife in our midst. Think next of the large amount of commercial depravity which exists! What cheating and overreaching are current in business transactions! Judged by the standard of righteousness, how does the political life of the nation appear? What about the opium wars, in which this country engaged with China a few years back? And yet, in face of all these unrighteousnesses, we expect a God of righteousness—a God who has revealed Himself as "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"—to regard us with favour, and to hear our prayers for national blessing. II. **THAT PRAYER FOR FAVOURABLE WEATHER IS A FIT SUBJECT FOR PRAYER.** "But," asks some, "do you not believe in the laws of nature as fixed, unalterable?" Most certainly we do; but, at the same time, we hold that it is not unreasonable or unscientific to pray for the modification of these laws. By the laws of nature we do not mean mere blind, unintelligent forces ruling the universe, but forces or powers which are under God's control, forces, indeed, which are God's modes or methods of carrying on the government of the natural world. Now we maintain that it is perfectly reasonable, and in entire accordance with scientific facts, that these laws should be capable of modification at the will of God, for to modify a law is not to suspend or to abrogate a law. Take an illustration from the matter before us—viz., the supply of rain. Rain falls through the law of condensation. The vapour in the atmosphere is condensed, and falls in the form of rain. Now, vegetation, trees and shrubs in particular, is favourable to the condensation of vapour, and, consequently, to the production of rain. Cut down the trees in a given tract of country, and the result will be a lessening of the rainfall. The law by which the vapour is produced remains in force, and the law of condensation remains in force, and yet the rainfall is diminished. Now, this is just what has happened in the land to which the text refers. Our argument, then, is this, if man has power to modify the weather, it is surely not unscientific or unreasonable to deny this power to God. He from whom all natural laws derive their power, and to whom they owe their allegiance, must be capable of modifying them at His will, and if sufficient reason exist why we should appeal to Him—if the temporal welfare of a whole people depend upon the weather—it is fitting that we should lay the matter before Him in prayer. But after all the main subject of our prayer should be that as a nation we should learn righteousness. It is permissible for us to pray for a return of national prosperity; but, above all, let us pray for the return of the nation, as more than one of our statesmen has expressed it, "to sanity and the Ten Commandments." It is manifest that if this is to be the case we must be righteous as individuals. A righteous nation is composed of those who are individually righteous. A nation cannot be righteous in the mass without being righteous in its units. (*William Spensley.*) **Your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking a king.**—*The Israelites asking a king*:—To stain the glory of all human pride, and to allow no flesh to boast itself in the presence of its Maker, is the great moral of sacred story. Man retains too much of his mould and faculties Divine, to overlook his own vast superiority over the rest of creation; but he has lost so much that he often overlooks God's measureless superiority over him. Hence it arises that the Almighty is so often left out of sight in the plans and purposes of His creatures; or, at all events, that He is only so far recognised as the acknowledgment may redound to the greater glory of self, and raise that shining idol to a brighter pedestal than it occupied before. We immediately fancy He is smiling on our unsanctified plans, and passing by, unavenged and uncared for, an affront put upon His own laws. It is a striking illustration of the folly of putting our own constructions on the silence or non-interference of

Almighty God, which is presented in that portion of Jewish history which has been brought before us. We find the holy seer warning the infatuated nation of the consequences which should result to them from the curse of a granted prayer. Presumption and infatuation, however, still swayed their counsels. Accordingly, by an immediate revelation from heaven, the prophet is directed to fix upon a young man, named Saul, as the anointed of God over His people; to whom, whilst in search of His father's asses, the prophet is instructed to make the offer of the kingdom. 1. And here we may note a striking illustration of that peculiarity in the arrangements of Providence by which a combination of seeming casualties becomes subordinated to the purposes of the Almighty, and chance is made a minister, to effectuate and perform His will. For, observe, Saul had been appointed, in the eternal decrees of Heaven, to take charge of the new kingdom; and yet, for all this, lots are to be cast, to determine who the new king should be. But in "casting the lot into the lap," man has done all that he can do; "the disposing thereof" rests "with the Lord;" and nothing can hinder, but that this lot shall find out the right person. Human contingencies are Divine certainties. All chance is only unseen design. God marshals accidents, as man originates plans; save only, that the plans may fail of their intended aim, whilst the accidents never can. 2. A granted prayer is not always a sanctioned prayer; and it will be time enough to rejoice in the blessing we have been seeking for when we find that "the Lord addeth no sorrow with it." "The prayer of the wicked" is often turned "into sin;" and the prayer of the impatient is almost sure to be turned into misfortune. God does exercise His authority over our lives, and He claims to exercise it over our desires as well. He forbids all presumptuous wrestlings with the course of His own Providence: all usurpations of His right to shape, direct, and regulate all our plans of life. Why is everything to be "according to our minds?" We would fain choose our own path. We would set up ourselves as infallible judges of what may be best and happiest for us. We judge of the fruit by its appearance, and not by its taste; we are satisfied with the breadth of the way, and never think of the end of the way. We would have a king, like the nations, to reign over us, and forget that "the Lord our God is our king." Learn, then, to tremble at your own success, whenever your impatient anxiety for some temporal good has, as it were, turned the channels of Divine Providence out of their usual course; when you have, so to speak, coerced the Almighty into a concession which the whole aspect of His Providences indicated His intention to keep back. If the door does not open of its own accord you must not force it. The concession, sooner or later, must be fatal to you. In letting you have your own way God has only laid down the sceptre to take up the sword; He has loosened "the cords of love," but it is to bind you with fetters of iron. He has given you a king, to lead you to the battles; but He will no longer "go forth with your armies," or crown your endeavours with victory. When we know that we have done, and are doing, that for which the arrow of God's pursuing judgments must be flying after us, it were better for our soul's peace that it should overtake us at once. The tardiness of its flight in time may be only to gather its more deadly poisons for eternity. And bitter as it may be to hear God's temporal chastisements, it were better to feel them than not to feel our own sin. 3. The instrument chosen of God for bearing His remonstrance to the Jewish nation, was the same venerable prophet. "A word spoken in season, how good is it!" How often do the arrows of the truth fall blunt and powerless upon the soul, from their not being aimed at the right time! We commonly allow the fault and the reproof to come too close together. We forget that a little interval between them would allow the offender time to think; the offended time to cool; and both, when the grace of God should so incline them, the opportunity and time to pray. Had Samuel uttered his bold remonstrance to the Israelites, under the first keen sense of the insult they had offered him, he would probably have been answered with scorn; but having waited till they supposed he had forgotten their unkindness, he beholds them now meekly entreating for an interest in his prayers. Such of you as are parents particularly I would exhort you to imitate Samuel's example in this respect. The expected reproof, even in children, is seldom a profitable reproof. Pride is on the alert; conscience has taken the alarm; and the whole artillery of excuses and self-justifications are being prepared for the encounter. But let the taste of sin have time to turn bitter on the tongue; let the sense of the wrongfulness of your children's fault be heightened by the tenderness which, on your part, seems to have passed it entirely by; nay, let the time for calling them to account be that when you are

showing them marks of continued kindness—and you will then find that pride will have nothing to answer; the convicted heart will be ashamed of its excuses; and wondering at this unexpected and undeserved forbearance, they will say with the penitent Israelites before us—"We have sinned; we have forsaken the Lord; pray for thy servants to the Lord thy God." 4. How many souls have perished from the desire to be "like the rest of the nations!" Things which men care little about for themselves, they yet desire and discountenance, because they would not displease others. They cannot pay the price of a holy singularity. "I cannot," says one, "bid adieu to scenes of vanity and folly, to the midnight revel and dramatic blasphemy, because I should be unlike all the nations." I cannot, in the multiplied occupations and intercourses of life, make profession of godliness, without at the same time bearing a witness against the nations; against their principles, which are opposed to Christ. Conformity to the world, or friendship with the world, can only be obtained at one price—enmity with God. What was Pilate's motive for staining his hands with the life-blood of the Son of God? He was "willing to content the people." Hear, then, the words of the Lord—the words of Samuel, yea, the words of all the prophets, God hath ever sent to you. They are as eloquent of mercy as the harvest thunder was eloquent of power. "Fear not. Ye have done all this wickedness;" ye have made for yourselves a king—a king of your wealth, a king of your pleasures, a king (it may be) of your griefs and cares. But if ye will now turn aside from this folly, and serve the Lord with all your heart, following no commands but His, desiring no smile but His, depending on no righteousness but His, and no longer like the rest of the nations, trusting to those vain things which can neither profit nor deliver, rest assured that, as Samuel declared to the Israelites, "the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake." Yes, the glory of that great name is bound up with, and brightened and magnified by a thousand pardons. The Redeemer's brow shall be illumined with a yet brighter radiance, and angels' bosoms throb with a yet diviner joy at each sinner that repenteth. (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*)

Ver. 19. Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God.—*Intercessory prayer*:—1. This Lesson contains Samuel's official farewell to the people—that is, as Judge. There is something touching in all farewells. Retirement from long and distinguished service has ever a shade of melancholy; it reminds us of the transitoriness of human life and human greatness. 2. There was one link with the old Judge which they were anxious to retain. The king might rule them in times of peace, and go forth with them as leader in times of war; he might be the representative of national unity and the key-stone of national greatness; but it was to Samuel they turned when they wanted to be remembered before God. With one voice they besought him, "Pray for thy servants," &c. **I. THE REQUEST.** "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not." 1. It is the language of fear. The people were terrified with the thunder and rain. God had shown His displeasure by this sign. 2. It is the language of faith. Samuel's power as an intercessor with God was a recognised fact. It was not the discovery of a passing emotion. 3. It may not be presumptuous to inquire wherein his great strength in this respect lieth. First, his vocation as a prophet brought him very near to God. Secondly, the office without the life is not of much avail. Samuel lived for God, and it appears that, according to the degree of sanctity to which individuals attain, so is the efficacy of their intercessions. **II. THE REASONS FOR THIS REQUEST.** Their sense of sin in having asked for a king. They feared death, lest a glittering flash of lightning—a symbol of Divine wrath—should at once consume them. 1. What was their fault? Viewed in reference to Samuel, it was ingratitude. 2. But, regarded in reference to God, the asking for a king was a rejection of His direct rule. (1 Sam. viii. 7). 3. Yet, what, looked at on the side of the spontaneous action of God's people, was a grave fault—"wickedness;" when viewed in relation to the course of events, was a result of a variety of causes. 4. But God can bring good out of evil. The formation of a kingdom was in His providence overruled to the ultimate fulfilment of His designs. Through it looms the kingdom of Christ and Christ the King, and, with the realised unity of the nation under a king, the carrying out of the Levitical Law as to one sanctuary; and in the temple, which was a result of this change, and its service and its Psalter, we have an image of the Catholic Church and her solemn ritual to the end of time. **III. LESSONS.** 1. To quicken our belief in the efficacy of intercessory prayer. 2. To remember that Christ is our invisible King and the Head

of His Church; and that obedience to an outward rule must be accompanied by inward obedience, for though the kingdom of God, that is, the Church, is visible, yet it is also an inward kingdom of "righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost." (*The Thinker*.)

Vers. 20—22. **And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not.**—*Danger of despondency*:—It is, I believe, no very unusual thing, however unwilling we may be to avow it, for persons to give way to a kind of despair, when they are called on to repent of their sins. They say to themselves, "It is too late now: it is no use pretending to keep the commandments, after so many years of transgression." And what is very remarkable, men change all at once into this method of excusing themselves, from one the very contrary to it, in which they have spent all their lives. We know too well, most of us, by experience, how common a thing it is to break God's plain commandments, and yet to keep one's conscience tolerably quiet, with the hope of repenting one day or another. At last we get ashamed and tired of dreaming of amendment, and promising it vainly to ourselves; we know by experience what the end will be if we again resolve and put off our resolutions: our consciences also have insensibly become hardened, and have lost all horror of sin as it is in itself: and in this state of mind it is no hard matter for the Evil Spirit to pervert our minds in a way exactly opposite to the former. Hitherto we have gone on, quieting ourselves every day with the notion that we might and would repent to-morrow; but now He keeps whispering to our disordered spirits, "What if it should be too late for you to repent at all?" Against such a snare as this it would seem that Samuel is guarding the children of Israel. They were to beware of that sullen fear which would make it impossible for them to repent; they were not to doubt that, wicked as they had been, and irremediable as their wickedness might be in some respects, still their best and only true wisdom lay in following the Lord for the future with all their heart. The great wickedness which the Israelites had done was this, that having been especially chosen and set apart by Almighty God to be His own people, and having so gone on for many years, receiving from Him peculiar and distinguishing favours, they were dissatisfied with their own condition, and rather wished themselves, as said the Prophet Ezekiel, "like the Heathen, the families of the countries," if not directly to serve wood and stone, yet to take liberties of one sort and another, very inconsistent with the pure and holy character of a people redeemed and marked as they were to be God's own. This was their sin; most dangerous to themselves, and most affronting to the Almighty: so that we need not wonder at the severity of Samuel's reproof, nor at the awful warning which God sent them from Heaven. It was a voice from above, most mercifully sent, to warn them what would come of it if they went on in the way which they had begun, and how much worse and more ungodly the temper in which they were acting than they had themselves imagined. Too often have we taken a perverse pleasure in slighting and undervaluing our own privileges. Surely in this way we have most of us too much to answer for, and our Lord might most justly and reasonably cast us off. But He has not done so; therefore, in any case we must not cast ourselves away. We may not, we must not, go in any kind of sin, under pretence of its being too late to cure ourselves of that ill habit at least. 1. To be a little more particular. The cases in which people are most apt to give themselves up are generally such as these following. First, when after having gone on religiously and blamelessly for many years, perhaps through the whole of youth and early manhood, the Devil prevails against any man, and he gives way to temptation, slight or strong, and knowingly commits any kind of deadly sin. The same Evil Spirit, who has so far had his own way with him, will presently try to make him think the case desperate. Thus, at first, through a feeling of despair, and afterwards through a sense of thorough incurable bad habit, men knowingly throw away their only remaining chance of repentance, and with it, of course, their only remaining chance of salvation. One of the sins in which this sad and fatal process may be seen most distinctly is the inordinate love of strong drink. And if it is so in drunkenness, much more in those sins, which in man's sentence as well as God's bring an irrecoverable stain on those who are guilty of them: such as unchastity, falsehood, dishonesty. One might well imagine that the Prophet Jeremiah was thinking on these two sorts of deadly sin—the unchaste and the deceitful—when he wrote that most fearful of all sentences, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye do good who are accustomed to do evil;" as

much as to say, "With men this is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." On the other hand, it is well for all, even the worst, to be sure there is hope so far, as that no one holy desire or good purpose, no one prayer or sigh of sincere repentance through Faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, can ever fall to the ground useless and vain. Hitherto I have spoken of great and notorious sins; practices which naturally startle the consciences of all men, such as unchastity, drunkenness, dishonesty: and I have shown what danger we are in of becoming hardened in these by a kind of despair, as if, having been long bad, we must of course go on and be worse. 2. A word must now be added on another way of going wrong, somewhat in the same kind, that is, by mere lightness of temper and shallowness of principle: when men, for instance, continue in the custom of profane swearing, or of dissolute wanton talk, or of backbiting and slandering, or of lying in common conversation. These persons are in one thing unlike the sinful Jewish people as described in Samuel; they are far from acknowledging that in their way of going on they are adding a great evil to their former sins: they look upon their ill words, as I just now said, one by one, not as making up a sum of mischief; they do not consider that such sinful habits are, as it were, a smothered, inward fire, gradually consuming the whole body. 3. There is another class who are especially apt to encourage themselves in sinning again by the very remembrance which ought most to daunt and humble them;—the remembrance that they have sinned much and often before:—I mean those who sin mostly in the way of omission; the habitual scorner of the Church and Sacraments of God. They say to themselves and sometimes to others, "It is so very hard to recollect what for so many years we have allowed to slip out of our minds;" and they fancy to themselves in some indistinct way that a little act of kindness or of devotion will go further, and tell for more, in their case, than in the case of one to whom such acts are familiar; making the great unpleasantness of the duty, which is an effect of their own sinful neglect, an excuse for their imperfect performance of it. Now the example of the Israelites and the Prophet in the text shows how all these and other like cases are to be treated. They must be spoken to very plainly, as Samuel spoke to those Jews: though full of all kindness towards them, he neither spared them at first, in reproving them plainly for their apostasy. "It is true," he said, "you have indeed done all this great wickedness; I cannot, I must not flatter you; your case is very bad; you have need to humble yourselves deeply before your God; but this one thing you must do; you must turn your attention earnestly from the Past to the Future; you must live in fear and trembling and watchfulness, that you add no more to your sad and heavy account: 'Ye have done all this great wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.'" This one sentence of the grave and mild Prophet may convey to us the meaning of the whole Scripture of God. Your past sins, He tells you, are at least as bad as you imagine them: but they are done, and you cannot undo them; very likely you may for ever have to bear the mark and stain of them; yet despair not; the worst consequence may yet, by God's mercy, be averted; only lay hold in earnest of that Cross by which hitherto you have held so slightly: fear always, but not with such a slavish, ungodly fear, as shall hinder you from doing your very best; preserve a holy obstinacy in following Christ for the future. (*Plain sermons by contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*)

Ver. 21. Turn ye not aside.—*Points of departure*:—Samuel assumes that the true path was clear before Israel; it knew its calling and destiny. To love God alone and to serve Him was the simple royal pathway. And Samuel here reminds the people that the imminent danger was not that they would execute a right-about and go back to Egypt, but that they should turn aside. So the grand path of life is clearly discovered to us. And our great danger is not that we should suddenly wheel about, but that we should deflect little by little. Let us note these points of departure from a higher to a lower life—from faith to unbelief, spirituality to worldliness, purity to laxity and immorality. I. **THESE POINTS OF DEPARTURE ARE NUMEROUS.** Men begin to live afresh, to live a better and still better life, prompted by most diverse occasions. On the other side, from all kinds of happenings men begin to gravitate. Beginning school awakes in one child a higher sense, whilst for another it is the loss of innocence and the beginning of evil, proving, as Michelet writes, that the real fall is the day when a boy leaves his mother. Leaving school initiates one youth into a more serious,

manly life, whilst another takes advantage of the change to relax discipline and begins to play a baser part. A change of residence or situation leads one to greater devotion and circumspection, whilst another from that time forward is distinctly poorer in character, the change destroying old habits of good. Marriage proves a truly golden day in the life of some—the beginning of higher thought, love, and purpose; for others the same event is altogether disastrous to their moral and religious life. After Methusaleh was born, Enoch his father walked with God. Events are always happening which are occasions of the rising or falling of souls, and herein lies the real seriousness of life. The danger comes from opposite directions. "Thou shalt not go aside . . . to the right hand, or to the left." Directly opposite phases of experience and circumstance prove equally fatal. II. THESE POINTS OF DEPARTURE ARE SLIGHT. We do not go off at an acute angle, or down a steep incline, leading right away from the Christian course; we simply get a little wrong, and this may end with ruin. The first departure from God is of really tremendous significance, and yet it may appear absolutely trifling. The descent into error is rarely violent. We speak of men falling into error, but more commonly they slide into it. There are half-way houses to superstition. There is a literature which deftly saps solemn convictions, and which, like the thief in the night, despoils men of a faith infinitely more precious than gold. The "down grade" in belief is a masterpiece of engineering, and many who follow it are all the time unconscious of any declination. The lapse into worldliness is usually a process of fine shadings off. The "little rift" in the lute slowly widening stills the music; but that rift is never more subtle and slow than it is in the lute which makes musical the hearts and lives of righteous men. The descent into wickedness is equally gentle. The beginning of sin is always obscure. Insidious are the beginnings of evil. The agents of darkness, as our poet says,

Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
In deepest consequence.

The slow and subtle way in which practical iniquity takes shape is one of the tragedies of life. M. Joly has recorded the experience of the police concerning the thefts that take place at the great Parisian shops. "This is the beginning. From a gallery one sees a woman—rich or well-to-do—who buys a certain number of objects and pays for them, but without asking permission she takes some little, almost insignificant, object—a little ribbon to fasten a parcel, a more commodious paper bag. No one will say she is stealing; no one will think of speaking to her or disturbing her. But she is observed, and even watched; for one expects to see her again some time after taking, as she walks along, say, a flower worth twenty-five centimes. A little later she will appropriate an article of greater value, and henceforth she will take for the pleasure of taking." Amid the glaciers of the Alps an explosion is sometimes heard announcing the birth of a crevasse. At first the young fissure is almost too slight to be seen, and at no place is it wide enough to admit a knife-blade. But the almost imperceptible fracture eventually becomes a gaping, impassable chasm. So it is when we break with good; the great gulf fixed between the lost and paradise began in a flaw hardly to be discerned. III. THESE POINTS OF DEPARTURE ARE SPECIOUS. It seems in the hour of temptation as if we should secure a great advantage by departing from a strict, literal fidelity to the path of duty. When Israel first dabbled with idolatry, they had no thought of renouncing God. They imagined that certain advantages were to be gained by intercourse with idolatrous nations, and that such advantages might be secured without losing in any measure the blessing of Jehovah. They became worse than the heathen. Very specious still are many of the things which draw us from God. The point of departure to worldliness is often similarly specious. Care for his family—this is the reason why Demas abates his religious enthusiasm and applies himself to business. James Hinton said, "Wishing to tempt an Englishman, the devil generally appears in the shape of the man's wife and family." And how plausible he is in this shape! How much is to be said for prudence and diligence! Oh, very rational, promising, enticing seem those openings which lead to a lower life! This is what Shakespeare meant when he wrote:

But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths.

"At Bypath meadow Christian said to Hopeful, 'If this meadow lieth along by our wayside, let's go over into it.' Then he went to the stile to see, and behold a path lay along by the way on the other side of the fence. 'Here is the easiest going,' said he; 'let us go over.'" Many paths on the other side of the fence seem to run parallel with Christian principle and doctrine, and yet they lead to death. The fence may be very narrow. Andrew Bonar writes: "Often I have wondered that I did not feel the temptations of Satan more frequently and plainly. But now I discover his plan. In short, he succeeds in reversing in my case, 'Seek first the kingdom of God.'" IV. THESE POINTS OF DEPARTURE ARE ALWAYS SERIOUS. Even if they do not lead us altogether astray or far astray, turnings aside are great evils. A tree grows so grandly because without vagary it develops itself according to its nature; the flower is so glorious because it concentrates itself on bud and blossom; the bee is so rich in honey because it follows the shortest line: and if we are to attain wealth and glory of character we must avoid lapses, eccentricities, obliquities, waste of time and power by diversions and repentances. These branchings off from the King's highway may lead to utter ruin. All wanderings of heart or life begin in a lack of faith either in the prize or in the path. Let us keep alive, then, an ardent faith in the grand prize of life. Life is not like a suddenly twisted kaleidoscope which at every turn discloses startling scenery, events, and experiences; still there will not be a day without its stepping-stones to higher things, and there will be critical, privileged days, bringing memorable chances and inspiration. (W. L. Watkinson.) *Backsliding arrested*:—I. The first point of instruction addressed to such is, THAT THEY SHOULD NOT PROCEED ANOTHER STEP IN THEIR BACKSLIDING. II. The second point of instruction which the prophet addressed to these trembling backsliders was, that THEY SHOULD HAVE A FILIAL CONFIDENCE IN GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT NOT DEPART FROM HIM. "Fear not, ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord with all your heart." III. This leads us to the third point of instruction addressed by the Prophet to the people, namely, THE GROUND UPON WHICH THEIR CONFIDENCE WAS TO REST. "Turn ye not aside; for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain. For the Lord will not forsake his people." IV. THE REASON WHY THE LORD THUS DELIGHTS TO BE GRACIOUS. For the Lord will not forsake his people, for His great name's sake: because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people." (B. Noel.) *The folly of turning aside from the Lord*:—The text is a defiance held out to men in their attempts to mend their condition by departing from the Lord. In which there is, 1. A case supposed, which is, That they should turn aside from the Lord; and having done so, they have the wide world to choose upon, let them take to the right hand, or to the left, choose the best they can pitch on, some or all, that what is wanting in one, may be made up in another. This is the utmost extent to which it can be carried. There is, 2. The determination in this case, which is expressed in the text with all confidence. Ye shall not, ye cannot for your hearts, turn aside, but after vain things; I defy you to find out a substantial good for yourselves in the whole creation, separate from God. Doctrine, That no man shall mend his condition, but will ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will. For illustrating this doctrine, I shall—I. TO OFFER SOME THINGS FOR EXPLAINING THE POINT. Here I observe, 1. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of rest to his heart, and satisfaction to the desires of it (Isa. lviii. 19, 20). 2. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of comfort and ease to his conscience. 3. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of his interest and advantage (Jer. ii. 13). 4. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, will better his condition, but ruin it, in point of security from evil (Prov. xxviii. 18), "Whoso walketh uprightly, shall be saved; but he that is perverse in his ways, shall fall at once." II. TO EVINCE THE TRUTH OF THIS WEIGHTY POINT. That no man shall mend his condition, but will ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will. 1. We are to evince the truth of this weighty point, by considering to what a person turns aside when he turns from God. It is but vanity, which cannot profit or deliver. There are but two things to which a person can turn aside, though the particulars are numberless. The character agrees either. (1.) To sin, that is, to sinful ways, courses, or practices. And while there is a God in heaven to avenge the affront, no man shall mend his condition in this way 2. To the

creature, to which, when men are turning aside from God, they turn to seek happiness. This comprehends all created comforts whatsoever. Of them we have two things to say. They are all uncertain, a person can never get a sure hold of them: (Prov. xxiii. 5), "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven." They are utterly insufficient. It is not in them to answer the cravings of the human heart, of an immortal soul (Isa. lv. 2). There is no suitableness in them to the soul. They have no Divine appointment for that end. 2. For evincing the truth of this weighty point, consider what a person turns aside from, when turning aside from God. He turns from an upmaking portion; (Psalm lxxiii. 25), "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Cleave to the Lord, turn not aside from him: for, (1.) Thou art enriched for time: (1 Tim. iv. 8), "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (Psalm xxxvii. 3). (2.) Cleave unto the Lord, turn not aside from Him, and thus thou art enriched for eternity (1 Tim. iv. 8), quoted above. Come death when it will, what then? thou shalt be carried where thy happiness shall be completed: (John xiv. 2). The law cannot debar thee from this happiness, it is satisfied; justice has nothing to say against thee, for the debt is paid: God is thy God; and the tongue of men, nor of angels, cannot fully express this privilege. 3. The truth of this weighty point in the text will farther appear, by inspecting the pretended gain which is acquired by turning aside from the Lord. It may all be summed up in these two particulars. (1.) It is nothing (Prov. xxiii. 5). All the gain is but children's gain, which they have won off their fellows, of which grown persons make no account. It is a poor trade where a person is not gaining for his soul; and no person will gain for this by turning aside from God. (2.) It is worse than nothing. Whatsoever thou thinkest thou gainest by turning aside from the Lord, a thousand times more is going to destruction in the meantime. Count what thou givest out, as well at what thou gettest in, and thou wilt soon see the gain worse than nothing (Matth. xvi. 26). From all which it is evident, that no man shall better his condition, but ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord; let him turn to what hand soever he will. I now proceed, III. TO MAKE SOME IMPROVEMENT OF THIS SUBJECT, IN AN USE OF INFORMATION. 1. You who have never yet turned to the Lord, but have been going aside from him all your days, know, that ye are yet in a ruinous condition; there is nothing you can call yours, but what is vanity, and cannot profit or deliver. 2. Backsliders, be all of you convinced of the foolish choice ye have made, repent, and turn again unto the Lord. What have you gained by your departure from him? 3. Ye who have got near God in this ordinance, ye may see that it is your duty and interest, by a holy tender walk, a living by faith, to hold where you are. 4. Disappointed communicants may hence be satisfied, that if you love your own souls, it is not for your profit to go aside to another door, to get your loss at the door of God's house made up another way. Be peremptory in your resolutions that you will wait upon the Lord, and not give over, how long soever ye be without sensible success (Gen. xxxii. 26). 5. Ye carnal ones, who are weary of waiting about the Lord's hand, and are longing to be back to the world as your element, saying in your heart, "When will the Sabbath be over?" Ye may see the propriety of checking these carnal notions: stir up yourselves to seek the Lord. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *How steadfastness is secured*:—Loose things on the deck of a ship will be blown or washed overboard when the storm comes. There is only one way to keep them firm, and that is to lash them to something that is fixed. It is not the bit of rope that gives them security, but it is the stable thing to which they are lashed. Lash yourselves to Christ by faith, and whatever storm or tempest comes you will be safe, and stand firm and immovable. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. For the Lord will not forsake His people.—God never forsakes His people:—1. LET US CONSIDER HOW GOD HAS MADE OUR NATION HIS PECULIAR PEOPLE. 1. It hath pleased the Lord to separate us in a peculiar manner from other nations. 2. It hath pleased the Lord to make us the objects of His peculiar care and protection. Thus He distinguished His ancient chosen people. 3. The Lord has been pleased to form us for His peculiar service, by making us, from the beginning, a religious people. II. TO SHOW WHAT GROUND WE HAVE TO HOPE THAT GOD WILL NOT FORSAKE US. It

appears from the preceding observations, that He has done a good deal to form us for Himself. Can we suppose that He would spend so much time and employ so many means to make us His peculiar people, without some wise and weighty reasons. 1. God will not forsake us because He loved and respected our fathers. As the effectual, fervent prayers of such righteous men must have been pleasing to God, so they give us ground to hope that He will long remember our land, and not forsake the children of those whom He delighted to love. 2. We are encouraged to hope that God will not forsake us, because He loves the pious posterity of our pious ancestors. God often spared the whole Jewish nation for the sake of those pious individuals who remained heartily attached to His cause and His interest. And as long as a succession of these godly men shall remain, we have reason to hope that the Lord will spare us from national ruin. 3. We may confidently hope not to be forsaken by God, because He may still answer very important purposes, by preserving and treating us as His peculiar people. One end may be, to make it appear to the world that He is able to protect a nation whom He has set apart for Himself, against their most powerful and subtle enemies. III. LET ME NOW APPLY THIS LEADING SENTIMENT AGREEABLY TO THE DESIGN OF THE DAY, AND THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT. 1. If God will continue to own us as His peculiar people, then we may confide in His wisdom and goodness, to defeat the designs of those, who attempt to destroy our national peace and prosperity. 2. If God will not forsake us, then He will enlarge us, and make us an exceedingly great and flourishing nation. 3. If God will not forsake us, but own us as His peculiar people, then it is to be expected that He will take effectual care to maintain the cause of religion among us. This will be necessary to promote our prosperity, and to prepare us to answer His chief design in making us His peculiar people. The cause of religion is now in a languishing state. Notwithstanding, therefore, the present triumph of vice and infidelity, we may confidently hope that our churches will live, increase, and flourish, till the end of time. This God will do for us, for His great name's sake. 4. If God intends to own and build us up as His favourite people, then He has much for us to do, in carrying into execution His gracious designs. This is probably the last peculiar people which He means to form, and the last great empire which He means to erect, before the kingdoms of this world are absorbed in the kingdom of Christ. God is now loudly proclaiming that we have much to do to maintain His cause, and promote His designs, in opposition to His and our enemies. 5. This subject teaches us how we ought to feel and to act in our present situation. Our feelings and conduct ought to be in conformity with the past and present dispensations of Divine providence towards us. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *God's protective presence*:—We can be sure of this, that God will be with us in all the days that lie before us. What may be round the next headland we know not; but this we know, that the same sunshine will make a broadening path across the waters right to where we rock on the unknown sea, and the same unmoving mighty star will burn for our guidance. So we may let the waves and currents roll as they list; or rather, as He lists, and be little concerned about the incidents or the companions of our voyage since He is with us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 23. **God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.**—*Samuel: An example of intercession*:—It is a very great privilege to be permitted to pray for our fellow-men. Such prayers are often of unspeakable value to those for whom they are offered. Intercessory prayer is a benefit to the man who exercises it, and is often a better channel of comfort than any other means of grace. The Lord turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. I would have you stirred up to diligent supplication by the example of Samuel, who is worthy to be placed in the very forefront of intercessors. I. Let us dwell upon **HIS HABIT OF INTERCESSION**, for it was most manifest in Samuel. We gather this from the text. He says, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." It is clear, therefore, that he had been in the continual habit and practice of praying for Israel. As to the success of Samuel's prayers, read his life, and you will find that he wrought great deliverances for the people. In the seventh chapter of this book we find that the Philistines grievously oppressed Israel, and Samuel bravely called the people together, to consider their condition, and bade them turn from idolatry, and worship the only true God, and promised them his prayers as a

boon which they greatly valued. These are his words: "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord." Samuel's prayers were so prevalent that the very elements were controlled by him. II. Notice in Samuel's case HIS PROVOCATION TO CEASE FROM INTERCESSION, which provocation he patiently endured. 1. The first provocation was the slight which they put upon himself. 2. Beyond the provocation which came from their slight upon himself he felt wounded by their utter rejection of his solemn protest. III. Notice Samuel in HIS PERSEVERING INTERCESSION. Though the people thus provoked him he did not cease from prayer for them. When the prophet knew that Saul was hopelessly rejected he did not cease to pray for the nation, but went down to Bethlehem and anointed David, and when David was pursued by the malice of Saul we find him harbouring David at Ramah, and exhibiting the power of prayer in his own house and in the holy place. I pray you, therefore, still persevere in supplication, and be supported in your perseverance by the knowledge that it would be a sin to cease to pray for those who have been the subjects of your petitions. Samuel confesses that it would have been sinful on his part to abstain from intercession. How so? Why, if he ceased to pray for the people, he would be neglecting his office, for God had made him a prophet to the nation, and he must intercede for them or neglect his duty. It would have been a neglect of the Divine glory; for whatever the people might be, God's name was wrapped up in them, and if they did not prosper the Lord would not be glorified in the eyes of the heathen. He could not give up praying for them, for their cause was the cause of God. It would have been a cruelty to souls if he who possessed such a power in prayer had restrained it. IV. Samuel showed HIS SINCERITY IN INTERCESSION by corresponding action, for he says in the words of the text, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way." So far from leaving off praying, he would be doubly diligent to teach them; and he did so. After praying for your friends, do try as well as you can to answer your own prayer by using the means which God ordinarily blesses. Some persons make idle prayers, for they use no effort for obtaining their requests. If a husbandman asks for a harvest, he also ploughs and sows, for else his supplications would be hypocritical. If we wish to see our neighbours converted, we shall labour for it in all ways. A man who wishes to shoot birds will, after a while, become expert in the sport, because he will give his mind to it: he will after a little practice become a noted marksman and know all about guns and dogs. A man who wants to catch salmon has his heart set upon his angling, and becomes absorbed in the pursuit. He soon learns how to use his rod and how to manage his fish. So he who longs to win souls, and puts his heart into it, finds out the knack of it by some means, and the Lord gives him success. There is a power in your gifts; there is a power in your speech; use these powers. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Intercessory prayer:*—I. ITS EFFICACY GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED. They felt that his words, if weak on earth, were mighty in heaven. Now this feeling implies their belief in the efficacy of intercessory prayer, and I make three remarks concerning this belief. 1. It is very common. There is nothing peculiar in the belief that one man on earth may have power in heaven to help his fellow-men. In truth, it is so common that I am almost disposed to regard it as one of the intuitive faiths of humanity. Priesthoods are everywhere, and this faith is the foundation of all priesthoods. 2. Divinely warranted. In truth, if it be an inborn faith, it must be Divinely warranted; for Heaven evermore encourages all that is truly natural. We find the Divine warrant in the numerous exhortations addressed to us in the Word of God to pray for our fellow-men. 3. Sadly abused. It is abused by those who trust to it irrespective of their own efforts. II. ITS NEGLECT DEPRECATED AS A SIN:—"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." It is the ordinance of God that man should assist his fellow-man, not merely by bringing his best influences to bear upon his mind, but by offering up his best desires to heaven on his behalf. This being the law, to neglect it is a sin. 1. It serves to impress society with the solemnity of man's existence. Surely, here in a world where the millions are grubbing in what is material and drudging with their hands, it is something to elevate us into stately seriousness to feel that there are men like Samuel endowed with powers to touch the heart of God, and so move the springs of history. 2. It serves to unite men together in spiritual interest. Mutual intercessory prayers are, of all influences, the most socially uniting. 3. It serves to nurture the deepest philanthropy. True intercession is

philanthropy exercising itself in the very presence of God. Where can it get a higher inspiration or a stronger impulse? (*Homilist.*) *Ceasing to pray for others is a sin against the Lord*:—The sentiments of the text are, that prayer for others is a duty, and the neglect of it is a sin. We will therefore inquire—I. **WHO ARE THE INDIVIDUALS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD PRAY?** 1. For our families. 2. For the Church of God. 3. For our country. 4. For the world. What an awful state is the world in, notwithstanding all the attempts which are made to mend it! II. **STATE THE ARGUMENTS FOR THE ADOPTION OF SUCH PRACTICE.** 1. We are related to each other, and therefore we should pray for one another. 2. We are dependent on each other's exertions for a subsistence. Some talk of being independent, but this is absurd. "The king himself is served by the field" (Eccl. v. 9). 3. The practice of praying for others will serve to keep alive in our hearts the most benevolent feelings towards them. 4. This practice may promote their salvation. III. **WE MAY OMIT TO PRAY FOR OTHERS.** The text is sufficiently indicative of this. 1. We may omit to pray for others through unconcern about our own salvation. 2. We may do it through unbelief in reference to the efficacy of prayer. 3. We may do it through prejudice. IV. **THAT OUR CEASING TO PRAY FOR OTHERS IS A SIN AGAINST THE LORD.** 1. It is a sin against the precepts of the Lord (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2). 2. Against the spirit of the Lord. The Holy Ghost works in our hearts feelings of benevolence and love, which give birth to prayer. 3. Against the example of the Lord. Learn—1. What straits people are brought into by their sinful conduct. 2. None can help us in our distress but God. 3. People in affliction are glad to have the prayers of those whom they have treated with insult before. 4. Good men pray for those who have despitely used them. (*Sketches of four hundred sermons.*) *The sin of prayerlessness*:—The sainted Robert Murray M'Cheyne wrote to his church at Dundee, during his last illness: "You have hindered God's work by your want of prayer. When God gives grace to souls, it is in answer to the prayers of His children. . . . When God puts it into the hearts of His children to pray, it is certain that He is going to pour down His spirit in abundance. . . . The salvation of those around you depends upon your asking. . . . I often think it strange that ever we should be in heaven, and so many in hell through our soul-destroying carelessness. . . . Plead and wrestle with God, showing Him that the cause is His own, and that it is all for His own glory to arise and have mercy upon Zion." **But I will teach you the good and the right way.** *Duties of ministers and people.* *The Chartists' visit to the Parish Church*:—I. **FIRST, THEN, LET US CONSIDER THE DUTIES INCULCATED;** and they are twofold. 1. With respect to the ministers of God. Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, considering the state of the people, exclaimed, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way." To a similar effect the apostle declared, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." These are the peculiar duties of the ministers of God,—prayer, and the ministry of the Word. Sweet is the work to those who know it, delightful is the duty of intercessory prayer. Of all those men of God whose histories are recorded in Holy Scripture, there is not one who did not delight in this duty. 2. The ministry of the Word: "I will teach you the good and the right way." So said the inspired prophet Samuel; so said a long line of faithful men of God, many of whom sealed their testimony with their blood; so said the apostles of Jesus Christ; and so say the ministers of God to this day. And is there presumption or affectation in saying, "We will teach you the good and the right way?" It would indeed be presumption if we conceived that we had chalked out that way for ourselves, or if it were the notions of man we had to teach you; but we know the good and the right way, and are able to testify to you that which we have seen, and that which we have believed. Revelation has taught us, and we know there is but one way, one good way, one true way; and that all other ways lead to the chambers of darkness and despair. And if these are our duties, what are yours? Mark the exhortation of the prophet in the text, "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart." This brief sentence contains the whole duty of man! "Only fear the Lord," said he to the tumultuous people; we stop to inculcate no other principle; if we gain your heart, we gain the whole man; we know all must follow; we know that the man who fears God has the grand principle of moral duty in him. If he wants the fear of God, he wants everything! he wants the cement of social society, that which binds man to man,

which gives peace and comfort here, and gilds the grave itself with hope. This is the standing or falling principle, "Only fear the Lord;" then your conscience shall be enlightened by the Spirit of God, your heart shall bend to the will of God. The noble testimony of Joseph's steward, to the trembling brethren is our guarantee, "I fear God!" Such a man will be a lover of justice, a lover of truth, and of everything that is honourable and of good report; whereas all others are as garnished sepulchres—they have sweet words in their mouths, but war in their hearts. Here is our security and our comfort; "only fear God." The other expressions in the text are but expletives of this duty: "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him." If a man fears God, he will be the servant of God, and he will serve Him in prayer and praise; he will serve Him with the best member that he has, with his body, soul, and spirit, consecrating all he has to His glory, not with hypocrisy, but "in truth." II. Let us then CONSIDER THE INSPIRING MOTIVE WHICH IS IMPLIED IN THE TEXT, FOR THE CHEERFUL DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES. Ofttimes the strongest appeal to the feelings and the affection is contained in one short sentence, or a suggestion conveyed by a single word; thus in the text: "Consider how great things the Lord hath done for you!" Now, let me transfer this appeal to you; let me apply it to your hearts and consciences as a motive; and I know of no stronger; if this fail, the treasury of God Himself is exhausted! He asks you to love Him, to fear and serve Him; and He does not place before you the terrors of hell, nor the fearful things of judgment to come, nor a world in flames; nor does He upbraid you by the stings of a guilty conscience; but He appeals to your love and affection! and He says, "Consider how great things the Lord hath done for you!" Hard must be that man's heart, ungrateful his bosom, who can look back over a whole life and not see one trace of the goodness of God, who can discern no token of Divine love, no sweet things mingled with his bitterness, nothing to allay his afflictions. Think of the spiritual mercies also which you have received at his hands. There are very few who are altogether unconscious of God's mercies to them in this respect. But the argument of Samuel on this occasion was a national argument: his exhortation was a national exhortation; and, therefore, I shall avail myself of it, and consider the words of the text in this point of view applicable to us all as a nation. "Consider, I pray you, how great things the Lord hath done for you." And is it possible that any one can be so ignorant or so wilfully blind as to deny that there has been a special providence over Great Britain, and that special mercies have been poured down on her? Has not our little island been floating on a sea of mercy? (F. Close, M.A.)

Ver. 24. **Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart.**—*The religious capability of man*:—I. THAT MAN CAN REVERENCE GOD. "Only fear the Lord." Reverence implies:—1. A sense of Divine greatness. For none can reverence the contemptible or the small. 2. A sense of Divine excellence. For none can reverence the morally unworthy. II. THAT MAN CAN SERVE GOD. "Serve Him in truth with all your heart." There is a sense in which all things serve God. 1. Some serve Him without their will. All the masses of matter, organised and inorganised, serve Him. 2. Some serve Him with their will. All rational existences do this, and moving thus they serve Him. 3. Some serve Him against their will. All fiends human and angelic do this. III. THAT MAN CAN CONSIDER GOD. "Consider how great things He hath done for you." Man can reflect on God, both on what He is in Himself and on what He does. What other creatures on this earth can do this? The eagle that pierces the clouds with a power of vision keener, and a range wider than ours, returns from its lofty flight to its lonely eyrie without one thought of God. (*Homilist.*) *Filial fear of God*:—Our feeling must be the reverence of a son, not the abject terror of a slave. For surely if this terror were merely that servile dread which represents God as an implacable inexorable Being, the soul under such an impression would sit down inactive, overwhelmed with a horrible despair, and never engage in a fruitless attempt to appease a Power whom no prayers could interest, no repentance reconcile. 1. It is clear that the fear of an awakened sinner who sues successfully for pardon differs vastly from that servile dread which would flee from God as an unfriendly Being delighting in the misery of His creatures. I know also that it differs greatly from that composed reverence with which the soul in a condition of confirmed pardon and reconciliation looks upon God. It is—if we may use the expression—an initial fear of God, it is the beginning of wis-

dom, it is the broken and contrite heart, looking with self-abasement yet with humble trust upon its omniscient Judge; and in proportion as we feel ourselves reconciled to Him in the face of Jesus Christ, the feeling will gradually ripen into that filial reverence accompanied by love which is the proper attitude of the justified soul towards its Maker. It is only as I conceive, upon the principles which I have enunciated that you can reconcile passages of God's Word which would otherwise appear contradictory. St. John tells us that perfect love casteth out fear, and that he who feareth is not made perfect in love, while other passages, such as our text and many like it, represent the Fear of God—coupled with obedience—as the whole duty of man; but all becomes plain when we understand the term as commencing with the initial fear which attends the imperfect conversion of the sinner, and leading on to that filial reverence which is the strength and ornament of the soul as that conversion progresses to its perfection. 2. I must go on to show the connection of the former clause of my text with the latter. How are we to bridge over the interval, as it were, between fearing God and serving Him in truth with all our heart? I presume in this way. We can imagine no motives for obedience either to an earthly or a heavenly father except either the value and certainty of the rewards proposed, coupled with a conviction of the ability and willingness of our father to confer them, or the apprehension of just and severe punishment for disobedience. Now, neither of these, exclusive of the other, is the true principle of our obedience to God. For if our obedience of the Divine law were founded merely on our belief of God's desire for our happiness then as soon as the rough wind of calamity swept over us, we should cease to regard Him as the God whom we had hitherto worshipped. On the other hand, if our service arose from our dread of the vengeance of God and nothing more, it would be deficient in that entire trust in His goodness, and free choice of His service which alone can make us acceptable in His sight. He is at once the Governor of the World, and "Our Father which is in heaven." Therefore, ere we can "serve God in truth with all our heart" our bosoms must be transfused with that fear of God which is made perfect in love. For if you regard it attentively you will observe that this principle of reverential love is most marvellously adapted to every state and condition in life, and to the due discharge of our duty at all times and under all circumstances. In a word, the fear of God rightly understood and rightly acted upon will give warmth to our zeal, spirit to our devotion, animation to our faith, life to our hope, and extension to our charity. It will deter us from sin; it will cheer and encourage us in the path of duty—that path which leads us unto everlasting life. I have thus given what may be regarded as a Christian interpretation of the fear of God, and shown you how it is the germ which blossoms unto the perfect love and service of our heavenly Father—a service which is both real and engages the affections of the whole heart. 3. God's claim to this Fear which I have described. That claim is founded on every one of the Divine imperfections. Can we think of His omniscience and omnipresence and justice without casting our meditations forward to that great day when we must all appear before His impartial tribunal? Goodness, holiness, mercy when exhibited by our fellow men win our hearts and charm us into admiration, but how puny are even their highest development on earth compared with the display of them in the character of God! The crowning proof of God's mercy we have reserved to the last—I mean His wondrous love and pity as displayed in the Redemption of the World by the death and passion of Christ. In Creation and Providence there is never conveyed to the mind any impression of effort or sacrifice on the part of the Supreme Being. The beauty and bounty which, through the long cycle of the ages, God has been scattering over this earth, have not detracted from His boundless wealth. But of Jesus, His well-beloved Son, He possessed no equivalent, no counterpart. Of this Possession only Himself could be the Parallel. And yet He Who alone knew its worth yielded it up for us. Behold, then, the power and mercy of Jehovah! Beware how you affront His Majesty by want of reverence, or dishonour His goodness by servile dread. It may not be our lot while upon earth to realise the Majesty and Beauty of His attributes. But a day will surely come, when the rapid years are hurrying on, when we shall behold Him no longer armed as our Judge, but displaying Himself as reconciled to us and at one with us through Christ. (*J. Hunt, M.A.*) *The simplicity of life*:—The great scientist is he who discovers some wide-reaching law of nature which explains a thousand facts otherwise disconnected and inexplicable; the great historian is he who seizes some deep social law which determines the development of nations through long

periods. Men of lesser genius seek to understand things superficially, and to correct them one by one, but the masters get to the root principle, the dominant law, the prevailing tendency. Now, in our text Samuel has got to the deep and final law of human life—"Only fear the Lord." Strange, complicated, contradictory, baffling as life seems, there is one simple principle, one sovereign passion, one master truth, that will solve for us every problem, subdue every opposition, and guide us safely through every difficulty. I. LET US CONSIDER THE TEXT IN RELATION TO NATIONAL LIFE. The kingdom of Israel was at this time in the throes of a great political change. They stood on the threshold of a new epoch. They were alarmed at the change they had made in their form of government; they were ashamed of the unbelief which had prompted the change; they were full of misgiving as to the consequences of this great political revolution. Then Samuel speaks: Ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, and all shall still be right. Did not our Lord teach us most clearly the self-same truth, that everything in human life depends upon the religious idea—that the knowledge and service of God constitute the one grand question which decides all other questions? There can be no doubt but that we live on the eve of vast changes alike in Church and State. And not only do these signs of the times, with fear of change, perplex monarchs, but they trouble many besides. Listen to your great prophet Carlyle, to your great critic Ruskin, to your great poet Tennyson. These and many more are full of misgiving as they ponder the signs of the times. Is not our text to us a very precious direction and encouragement? In all this confusion and conflict true religious faith and feeling shall preserve us, and bring us through in safety. It will prove our sheet-anchor in the storm, our guiding-star in the hour of darkness, our spring of strength and hope always. Everything depends upon the religious faith and life of our nation. Let this be true and deep, and all shall be well. But it must be true and deep. "In truth with all your heart." A national profession of Christianity will not save us, a barren orthodoxy will not save us, but if the heart of the nation be sound God will not desert us. "For consider how great things He hath done for you." We have had perils before, and they were averted. The religious sentiment revived in the Puritan saved us from the terrible despotism which the Stuarts sought to fasten upon us. The religious sentiment revived in Wesley and Whitefield saved us from atheism and its horrors when Voltaire with a light heart led the French nation into a sea of blood. The religious question comes before all others, it is the deepest question of all, it decides all others. Let us be full of faith and spirituality; let us honour God and the higher law; let us be true to prayer, to worship, to God's Holy Word; let us do our duty in the fear of God; and God will untie our knots, solve our problems, protect our liberties and glory, and lead us into a larger and richer inheritance. II. LET US CONSIDER THE TEXT IN RELATION TO PERSONAL LIFE. To the individual life often appears chaotic, confusing, and we are sometimes tempted to give it up in despair. In all perplexities touching belief the best philosophy is the philosophy of the text. Proceed in practical life to perform the duty that presents itself in the fear of God, live from day to day keeping close to conscience, and the Spirit shall teach you the true thing and the right way. When Frederic Douglass was a slave, escaping from the Southern States, it was strictly necessary for him to travel by night, and his grand guide was the North Star. He knew nothing of the country through which he was passing, it was all silence and darkness and mystery, but keeping his eye on the Star of the North, it guided him to liberty. So you may mentally be traversing a land of mystery, a land of darkness and of the shadow of death, but you have a precious beacon. "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth," follow that star, and the Dayspring shall arise upon you. Does any one object that such mottoes as these are vague generalities, out of which we can get little good? "Only fear the Lord." "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel." Does any one cavil at these sayings as if they were not definite and illuminative? When some one objected that the clauses in the American Declaration of Independence, such as, "All men are equal," and so forth, were but "glittering generalities," Emerson replied that they had proved "blazing ubiquities," they had poured the light of salvation on the nation's path at great moments. So with these sayings, they have a very definite and immense significance, they are blazing ubiquities, and they will throw a precious light on all the questions and interests and duties of life, as the pillar of fire lit up every stick and stone of the wilderness. In hours of

deepest darkness and confusion be loyal to the text—only that, and nothing more. I remember once hearing a devout engine-driver relate his religious experience. He said, "The other night when I was on duty there was a dense fog; we could not see a yard before us, but I knew that the permanent way was under us, and every now and then we caught a glimpse of some signal or other, and in time came safely to the journey's end; so," he said, "I know if I am true to the great commandments and promises God will guide and bring me through." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Samuel's address to Israel*:—I. **THE DUTIES URGED.** "Fear the Lord, and serve Him," &c. 1. To fear the Lord. This is an indispensable part of true godliness. Setting Him ever before us. (*Job xxviii. 28; Psalm xix. 9; Prov. xxiii. 17; Rev. xiv. 7.*) 2. To serve God. In the way that He appoints. With the voluntary devotedness of the heart and life. With constancy and perseverance. 3. It must be in truth with all our hearts. Notice:—II. **THE POWERFUL MOTIVE SUPPLIED.** "For consider what great things the Lord hath done for you." This is seen: 1. In the temporal provisions of His bounty. 2. In providential interpositions. 3. In the exercises of His mercy. 4. In the supplies of His grace. 5. In the promises of glory. Learn:—1. The practical nature of true religion. It includes both the fear and service of God. 2. How great are our obligations thus to fear and serve God. 3. Abused mercies will bring a fearful weight of judgment upon us. (*J. Burns.*) *Gratitude a motive for Divine service*:—To all such seers as Samuel, all history has a moral; indeed, all history is an argument. Thus he deals with the history of Israel, as an argument for their serving God. We notice here:—I. **THE SERVICE CHARACTERISED.** It is to be marked: 1. By reality. "Serve Him in truth." This distinguishes it from all mere external service, as well as from all hypocrisy. "Be real," is the foundation-stone as well as the top-stone. It is to be marked: 2. By heartiness. "With all your heart." There is to be vitality as well as sincerity, enthusiasm as well as thoroughness. II. **THE MOTIVE ENFORCED.** There are two other motives for serving God besides this one. 1. The supreme one is adoration of God. Were there no rewards or punishments, no heaven or hell, He commands our service by what He is. The Infinite Beauty claims our homage, the Infinite Righteousness our obedience. 2. Another and proper, though inferior, motive is regard to reward. Christ uses it in many of His parables. Moses had "respect to the recompense," etc. Jesus, "for the joy that was set before Him," etc. 3. But the motive pleaded here is gratitude for what God has done. "Great things." These are words which Moses and David as well as Samuel use in speaking of God's dealings. We may note the parallel between God's dealings with the Jews and His dealings with us—Redemption, Protection, Discipline. But the parallel fails; He has given us Christ; the demand on our gratitude is transcendent, the claim for our service unparalleled. (*U. R. Thomas.*) **Consider how great things He hath done for you.** *Thanksgiving Sermon, 1817*:—In applying these words to ourselves let us: I. **BRIEFLY REVIEW SOME OF THOSE GREAT THINGS WHICH GOD HATH DONE FOR US.** These are recorded in the annals of our country, in almost every page of which we meet with instances of Divine interposition and guardianship, which must compel him who loves his country or his God, to lift up his grateful and adoring heart to Him who ruleth over all. Still there is preserved that form of government in which we so deservedly rejoice. Still there is preserved unto us the inestimable privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of our own consciences. It is another mercy which peculiarly calls for our praise that the triumphs of the Gospel during the last year have in our country been extensive. In passing from our country in general, to the city which we inhabit, we still see that God hath done great things for us. To whom have we been indebted for the almost unprecedented healthfulness of our city, but to that God who sends sickness or preserves life at His pleasure? What great things has God done for us as individuals? Here your own meditations must supply what we can only intimate. But I forbear: Thy mercies, Lord, are innumerable; and to reckon them up in order before Thee is as difficult as to count the stars in the heavens, or the sand which is on the sea-shore. II. **SHALL OUR HEARTS BE UNAFFECTED BY THIS KINDNESS OF OUR GOD?** Ingratitude, with respect to men, is ever considered by you as the evidence of a most abandoned character, as the unfailing mark of a total dereliction of every noble emotion; and yet how many of us, occupied by the cares of the world, engaged in the pursuit of a thousand frivolous objects, never feelingly remember the goodness of the Lord. The exercise of gratitude for the Divine mercies is certainly the most elevated of all the occupations of the believer; for it leads us,

thus to speak, even to heaven, and attaches us immediately to God; it places in our heart the greatest object that can engage it, in our mouth the greatest name which can fill it; it unites us to God in a manner the most tender and disinterested by emotions of love, by emotions which have for their end the glory even of God. But how shall this gratitude be expressed? Is it sufficient for us coldly to bless God with our lips; unconcernedly to enter into His holy temple, and unite with His people in declaring our thankfulness? No, this alone will not satisfy Him who searcheth the heart; who trifles not with us, and will not permit us to trifle with Him. We must "fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth, with all our heart." This filial fear must necessarily impel us to "serve the Lord in truth, with all our heart." It will not rest satisfied with the most splendid outward performances: since "God is a Spirit," the believer will pay his thanks "in spirit and in truth." If these be the sentiments of his soul, if this be the conduct of his life, his tongue cannot be silent. Gratitude, which loosed the tongue of Zechariah at the birth of John the Baptist, will loose his also, and cause him to glorify God with a loud voice. III. SUCH A MODE OF EXPRESSING OUR GRATITUDE BY DEVOTING OUR LIVES TO THE SERVICE OF GOD IS RIGHT AND GOOD. It is the right way enjoined upon us by the nature of things, as well as by the authority of God. 1. It is a way which is profitable, and will secure for us new favours. God wastes not His blessings: the streams of His goodness will not always flow upon a barren and unfertile soil: He will at last turn them to those places that will be rendered by them luxuriant and productive. 2. This way is pleasant and good. Yes, act thus, and every situation in life will be to you full of blessedness. Prosperity will not be to you as to the ungrateful, a snare for your virtue; it will never for you be turned into a curse; you will preserve in the midst of your enjoyments a heart humble, docile, detached from the vanities of the world. (*H. Kollock, D.D.*) *Benefits of remembrance*:—God gives us remembrance in order that we may make great and blessed use of it. Often in our hearts may shine an after-glow of uncoruscating light from a sun that has set, more lustrous, more calm, more mellow, than when its hot fervours were falling on our heads—a pensive, clear, and still Indian summer of memory after the sultry autumn has gone. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *National mercies*:—These words conclude the sum of the whole chapter, wherein Samuel had made a long narration of God's dealing with His people, and theirs with Him. In the words are: 1. An exhortation to fear and serve the Lord. 2. The reasons of it. Consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye do wickedly ye shall perish both you and your King. This duty meets us everywhere in Scripture, and therefore I will stand no longer in explaining it, but come to the reasons that enforce it. I. THE FIRST IS TO CONSIDER HOW GREAT THINGS THEY HAD SEEN GOD DOING FOR THEM, AND THEREIN SEE WHAT A TIE AND BOND THE LORD HATH UPON THEM TO OBEY HIM. Consider what spiritual mercies He hath vouchsafed you, when of old ye were no people, but an Amorite was your father, an Hittite your mother. If you cast your eyes back to temporal favours, consider how He went down with your fathers into Egypt, and what wonders he wrought for them in that land. If you cast your eye upon present things, consider how you have rebelled and cast the government of Jehovah from off your necks; and yet He forbearth you, not plaguing you according to your demerits, but hath condescended to yield you a king. 1. Israel must consider the works of God in the greatness of them, their multitude, variety, freeness, and sweetness; in their own unworthiness of them, and their misery without them. All these will make them swell in our eyes to a wonderful magnitude. And that many cords bind faster than one, unto love and duty: And in many great mercies such a flame of affection shineth out upon the Church as much water cannot quench; and this sense of God's love enlargeth our affections with zeal and fervency, to love Him again. 2. Israel must consider who hath wrought these great works; and that is the Lord. Consider what the Lord hath done for us. Israel shall set an higher price on the mercies, because they are the Lord's; as you know it doubles the favour, to be from a friend, a father, or a dear hand. The gift is but the shell; the grace of the giver the kernel. All waters issue from the sea by secret channels, but run openly back again to it. So all the streams of mercy must, in the right use of them, return to the boundless sea whence they first flow unto us. 3. Israel must consider for whom God hath done all these great works, namely for Israel. The greatest works of His mercy are but His love tokens to Israel. In all which not the greatest mercy itself, but the application of it to ourselves, whets up and sets an edge upon thankfulness. And thus in this place it serves Samuel's

purpose to bring home the mercies close to Israel. 4. Israel must consider for what the Lord hath wrought all these great things for them : And this, three ways. (1.) In respect of the mercies themselves, to remember and keep them in mind. As men of trading have their day's book for their receipts of every day, so should we make a day-book of our receipts, and by occasion of one (while we turn leaves) look often upon others, which we look not for. (2.) In respect of God, to think of some return. One good turn requires another, we say; and among men we are careful to answer kindness with kindness. So saith David, What shall I return or render to the Lord for all his benefits? (Psalm 116, 12.) I have nothing to give Him but His own; I have nothing worth giving Him, or worth the taking. But know, He desires nothing beyond that thou art able to give, and he accepts according to that we have. For free favours, he expecteth but free thanks, free duties, fast affections. He hath given us the choicest and best things we have, and we in way of thankfulness must return and offer the best things we have unto Him (Levit. ii. 1), the cakes for the meat-offering must be made of the finest flour. We must offer the best of our time, our youth, our strength; the best of the day, the morning for His service; the best part of ourselves, our hearts, which will bring our whole selves. (3.) In respect of others, to provoke them to praise God with us, as the cock clapping himself rouseth himself, and by crowing provoketh others (Psalm xxxiv. 3.) Say as the lepers, Come, this is a day of good tidings, we do not well to be silent. II. AND NOW, HAVING DONE WITH ISRAEL, LET US SEE WHAT GREAT THINGS GOD HATH DONE FOR US, AND WHETHER THEY BE NOT AS WORTHY OUR CONSIDERATION. What? As great things for us? We never were in Egypt, nor in the bottom of the sea, nor in the wilderness fed with manna, &c. 1. Let me a little untie a bundle of spiritual mercies wrapt up together. And was the covenant of grace more peculiar, more sure, half so clear to Israel, as to us? What oracles had they, which we want? Had they the law written, and have not we? And to the prophets, the whole Gospel added, the evangelists, Apostles, pastors, and teachers? Had they the true worship of God in shadows, and have not we in substance? Had they the promises in hope, and have not we them in mind? Had they Moses, faithful as a servant in the house, leading them through the wilderness, and Joshua to save them, and lead them into Canaan? And have not we one faithful in the house as the Son, and our great Joshua, a great Saviour, to lead us into the celestial Canaan? Had they the Lord nearer unto them than any nation, walking among them in the Ark, in the pillar of the cloud and fire, and the like? And is our God farther from us? Nay, is He not nearer unto us, even our Immanuel. Had they plenty of manna, purity of worship, and extraordinary protection, and are we inferior to them, or any age before us, in the liberties of the Gospel, and happy days of grace? 2. Next, are we behind them in temporals? Hath not God brought our vine out of Egypt, where it grew not well, with signs and wonders, and a strong hand, when we were in Egyptian darkness and the Babylonish captivity. How did His strong arm pull us out of popery, and make the happy restoring of the Gospel the new and glorious birthday of our country? Did the Lord give them a good land, flowing with milk and honey? And hath He not seated us in a land far exceeding that in commodity, as in quantity, four times as big, every way as fruitful. As he gave them saviours and deliverers, so have we had our Moseses, our Joshuas, our Kings in a settled government, who led us forward in the Gospel, where the former left us. As the Lord gave Israel extraordinary victories and deliverances, which struck dread into all the nations about them, so hath He done for us, who have been made the head of nations, and not the tail, honoured and feared abroad, as well as happy at home. The conclusion of all is in verse 14, Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in uprightness. The sins of kingdoms are the destroyers of kings and kingdoms. Sin makes havoc of all, confounds all, and brings derision to all estates; makes the tail the head, changes the fine gold, and makes it dim like to earthen pitchers. It gives up the strong staff and beautiful rod to be broken (Jer. xxxviii. 17.) (T. Taylor, D.D.)

Ver. 25. **But if ye shall do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.**—*Sin ruins a kingdom*:—Such was the language of Samuel to the Jews. He requires of them nothing superstitious; nothing merely ceremonious; nothing only external and temporary—but the exercise of piety flowing from the fear of God, and accompanied with sincerity and fervour in serving Him. This is all. "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart." This

He enforces by two motives; the one drawn from gratitude, and the other from interest. Already I hope you have dropped Judea, and fixed your attention on your own country. The words could never have been more applicable to the Jews than they are to us. Has He not done great things for us? It is not foolish partiality, but truth that compels us to say, "The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage." And to secure all these civil and religious advantages—how often has He made our cause His own! How seasonably and signally has He interposed to save us from the designs of our enemies! When brought low He has helped us. Can we be insensible to all this? If there were any ingenuousness in us, this motive alone would be sufficient. But fear has its use—and it is necessary to tell you not only that you are bound by gratitude, but interest. "If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be destroyed, both you and your king." This is dreadful—Think of a king you love, as well as honour, and "whose life is a lesson to the land he sways"—driven from his throne. Think of liberty exchanged for slavery. Think of property rapaciously plundered, or devoured by tyrannical exaction. Think of your private dwellings affording those who are dearer to you than yourselves no security from brutal passions. Think of the temples of God burnt up, or converted to other purposes. 1. If there be a moral governor of the universe, sin must provoke Him. For who could adore a Being who professed to govern the world, and suffered the wicked to go on with impunity? 2. If sin provoke God He is able to punish it. All the elements are His. Every creature obeys His nod, from an archangel to a worm. Is anything too hard for the Lord—when He would either show mercy or execute wrath? 3. Bodies of men are punishable in this world only. In eternity there are no families, churches, nations. If, therefore, a country is to be destroyed, it is tried and condemned and executed here. 4. There is a tendency in the very nature of sin to injure and ruin a country. It destroys subordination. It relaxes the ties which bind mankind together, and makes them selfish and mean. Social welfare cannot survive the death of morals and virtue. 5. God's dealings with guilty nations are confirmed by His word, and indeed by all history. Finally, to enable us to draw the conclusion, He often—he always—gives previous intimation of His displeasure—so that, were not men blind and deaf, they must see and hear His coming. When you see the body wasting away by disease, and every complaint growing more inveterate, you suspect that death will be the consequence—it is already begun. "When the fig-tree, and all the trees, put forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh." And how is it that we do not perceive that God is angry with us—that He is contending with us? But, you ask—Have we any cause to fear this? I answer, just in proportion to the degree of our sin. Now there are two ways by which we may judge of our national guilt. The first is to enumerate the sins which reign predominant among us. The other method is to lay down criterions, by which we may estimate the prevalence and the aggravations of sin in a country. And what test has ever been devised that is not alarming when applied to ourselves? There is one thing of which we hear very much, and many seem to consider it as a counterpoise to all our fears, that there are so many good people among us. Blessed be God, this is true, and they certainly afford us encouragement. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom. Let us remember that it is a hopeful circumstance—but that it does not absolutely insure the salvation of a country. Let us recollect that there was a time when God used the following language to Jeremiah and Ezekiel concerning the Jews: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me: for I will not hear thee. Then said the Lord unto Me, Pray not for this people for their good. Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people: Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth." What learn we from all this? That there are cases in the history of nations when the Divine forbearance is exhausted, and when the cries of the righteous will avail no more than those of the wicked. Let us prize those institutions which are favourable to the morality and sanctification of mankind. Especially let us value the Gospel. And, oh! remember, if your country should be saved, and you as an individual continue impenitent—you—you will be certainly destroyed! And what is any national calamity to "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power!" (*William Jay.*) *Sin the ruin of nations:*—The influence which continuance in sin hath upon a kingdom's ruin. But here a material question may be asked, whether this connection between their doing wickedly and being consumed were not by virtue of that political covenant between

God and the people of Israel, which was peculiar to themselves; and how far it may be just and reasonable to argue concerning the case of other nations, with whom God hath entered into no such covenant, as He did with them? To make this clear, and to bring it nearer to our own case, I shall proceed in this method.

1. To show that God doth exercise a particular Providence with respect to the state and condition of kingdoms and nations. 2. That according to the usual method of Providence their condition is better or worse as the people are. 3. That there are some circumstances of sinning which do very much portend and hasten a people's ruin.

I. THAT GOD DOTHE EXERCISE A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE WITH A RESPECT TO THE STATE AND CONDITION OF NATIONS, *i.e.*, as they are united into several and distinct bodies, which are capable as such of being happy or miserable. For since mankind's entering into society is both necessary and advantageous to them, and God doth not barely permit and approve, but dispose and incline men to it, and hath given them laws to govern themselves by, with respect to society, it is but reasonable to suppose that God should call men to an account in that capacity. Either, therefore, those societies as such shall go wholly unpunished, or they must suffer according to them in this world, and therefore here the case is very different from that of particular persons. We say, and with a great deal of reason, that it is no disparagement to the justice of God's Providence for good men to suffer, or for wicked men to escape punishment in this life, because the great day of recompense is to come, wherein there will be a Revelation of the righteous judgment of God. But that will not hold as to nations, who shall not suffer in communities then as they have sinned here; and therefore it is more reasonable to suppose the rewards and punishments of such shall be in this life according to the measure and proportion of their sins. And of this we have sufficient evidence in Scripture upon these accounts. 1. Because it charges guilt upon nations as well as upon particular persons. 2. Because the Scripture tells us of a certain measure to which the sins of a nation do rise before they are ripe for punishment. This was the reason given why Abraham's children must stay to the fourth generation before they come to the possession of the promised land, for the iniquity of the Ammorites is not yet full. 3. Because it attributes the great revolutions of government to a particular Providence of God, God is the Judge, or the supreme Arbitrator of the affairs of the world, He pulleth down one and setteth up another. Which holds with respect to nations as well as particular persons. When a nation is near some dreadful calamity, as a just punishment of its sins, God takes away the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent, and the resolution of the men of courage, that they all stand amazed and confounded, not knowing how to give or take advice; but they are full of fears, and rather apt to quarrel with one another than to consult the general good. This was just the state of Egypt when God did purpose to execute His justice upon it. (1.) First, their courage failed them. (2.) Their counsels were divided and infatuated: And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians. The Princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof, and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a reeling man staggereth in his vomit, *i.e.*, they know not what to fix upon, all their counsels being so uncertain, and the best taking no effect. But on the other side, when God raises up a nation to be a scourge to other nations, He inspires them with a new spirit and courage, unites their counsels. Look over all the mighty revolutions which have happened in the kingdoms and empires of the world, and the more ye search and consider and compare things together the greater truth you will find in this observation. When God designed to punish the Eastern nations for their transgressions, then the Babylonian monarchy rose so fast and spread so far that nothing was able to stand before it. And when the sins of Babylon called for vengeance, God raised up Cyrus, and called him by his name, long before he was born, and brought the fierce nations of the East to submit themselves to him. 4. Because the Scripture still leaves hopes of mercy to a people where they have a heart to repent. And where repentance hath intervened between the threatening and execution of judgment God hath showed wonderful kindness either in stopping, removing, or deferring the severity of judgments. (1.) In stopping His hand when it hath been lifted up, and just ready to strike. We can desire no clearer instance in that case than that of Nineveh. (2.) In removing His hand when it hath struck. (3.) In putting by the stroke for the present, or deferring the execution of His wrath. II. The second

particular is THAT ACCORDING TO THE USUAL METHOD OF PROVIDENCE THE STATE OR CONDITION OF A PEOPLE IS BETTER OR WORSE ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL NATURE OF THEIR ACTIONS. If they be good and virtuous, careful to please God, diligent observers of God's Laws and their own, and dealing with other nations according to the laws of nations, they will live in a much more flourishing and happy condition than a nation can do where atheism, profaneness, and all sorts of wickedness abound, which I shall prove two ways. 1. Absolutely, and that will appear (1.) From the tendency of true goodness and piety to promote a nation's honour and interest abroad. And no man is ignorant how much reputation brings of real advantage to a nation; and that a people despised are next to a people enslaved, and that it is impossible to hold up honour and esteem in the world, where the reputation of virtue is lost. (2.) From its tendency to maintain peace and tranquillity at home. (3.) From the keeping up the spirits, and securing the safety of men. A good conscience makes a man dare to do his duty; but the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. 2. Comparatively, if we do compare several nations together, we shall find those to flourish most and to be the most happy where men do most fear God and work righteousness. This may seem a paradox at first hearing to those who consider by what ways of fraud and violence, of injustice and cruelty, of rapine and oppression, the great and mighty empires of the world have been raised and maintained. Yet, notwithstanding this plausible objection, the truth of my assertion will appear, if we understand it as we ought to do with these following cautions. (1.) That it is not to be understood of the largeness of dominion, or superfluity of riches, but of the true happiness of living in society together, which is by promoting the real good of all. To which the vastness of empire, and immensity of riches is by no means necessary, but a sufficiency both of strength and treasure to defend itself in case of foreign enemies, and to provide for the necessities and conveniences of all the members of it. (2.) That this is not to be understood of the private benefit of any particular persons, but of the general good of all sorts and conditions of men. (3.) That it is not to be understood of sudden and surprising events, but of a lasting and continued state. (4.) It is to be understood of persons under equal circumstances, when we compare the condition of people with each other: not the nobles of one nation with the peasants of another, nor the princes with the people, but every rank and order of men with those of the same rank and condition. And upon these terms we need no other proof of the truth of this assertion than the instance in the text of the people of Israel, which will best appear by comparing the state of both kingdoms after the body of the people was broken into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The kingdom of Israel by Jeroboam's policy, and for reasons of state, fell off from the worship of the true God, and worshipped the calves of Dan and Bethel. But did they prosper or succeed more than the kingdom of Judah? The ten tribes had a much larger territory, yet the kingdom of Judah was stronger and flourished more, and continued longer by 135 years than the kingdom of Israel did; and when they were carried into captivity the ten tribes were lost as to their name and interest among the people of Assyria; but the two tribes were restored after 70 years' captivity under the princes of the line of David.

III. THAT THERE ARE SOME CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE SINS OF A NATION WHICH DO VERY MUCH PORTEND AND HASTEN ITS RUIN. 1. When they are committed after more than ordinary mercies received, such as in reason ought to keep men most from the commission of them, as greater knowledge of the will of God that other people enjoy, more frequent warnings of their danger than others have had, many and great deliverances which God hath vouchsafed. 2. When they are committed with more than ordinary contempt of God and religion. 3. When there is an universal degeneracy of all ranks and conditions of men. Thus I have considered the influence which doing wickedly hath upon the ruin of a nation, it remains now that I make application of this to our own case. We have been a people that have received wonderful mercies and many final deliverances from God's hand. He hath placed us in a rich and fruitful land, and hath furnished us with so great plenty, that even that hath been thought our burden; hath blessed us with such an increase of trade that our merchants far exceed those of Tyre both in riches and number. Our ships of trade are like a valley of cedars when they lie at home, and when they are abroad they compass the earth, and make the riches of the East and West Indies to meet in our streets. As to our civil constitution, if we consider the admirable temper of our government, the justice and wisdom of our laws, and the greatness of our liberties, we have no reason to envy the condition of any

people upon earth. Thus far all things tend still to make us a happy nation if we did know and value our own happiness. But that which above all other things should make us so hath been the great occasion of our trouble, and is still of our fears, and that is religion. And yet in this respect we have advantages above any other nation in the Christian world, having a Church reformed with so much wisdom and moderation as to avoid the dangerous extremes on both sides. But before I conclude the text suggests to us three things, very pertinent to the duty of this day, which I shall briefly recommend to your consideration. 1. Matter of humiliation for our sins, as they have an influence upon the nation's suffering. 2. Matter of advice, only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth, and with all your heart. 3. Matter of encouragement, for consider what great things He hath done for you. (*Edward Stillingfleet.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1. Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel.—*The War of Independence*:—The sacred historian prefaces the account of the War of Independence with a statement as to Saul's age and reign. The Revised Version thus gives it: "Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years over Israel." There is no mention of Saul's age in the present Hebrew text, the number having been accidentally dropped in the copying; but the number thirty, which the translators of the Revised Version have adopted from an emendation of the Septuagint, is very probably correct, as thirty was the usual age for public service amongst the Jews. As to the second half of the statement, many, such as Ewald and Dean Stanley, take it to be a correct account of the period that elapsed between Saul's election and the War of Independence. According to them, the War of Independence began after Saul had reigned two years. But there are several considerations which go to show that this can hardly be accepted. 1. The abject condition of the country when the War of Independence began. 2. The age of Jonathan. Jonathan appears in the War of Independence as the captain of a thousand and one of the most heroic warriors of the nation; and as such he could hardly have been less than twenty years of age. That would make him, if Saul had only reigned two years, eighteen years of age when his father was elected king. 3. The sad deterioration in the character of Saul. The character of Saul, as displayed in the War of Independence, is in marked contrast with that portrayed in the early part of his history. As a young man in the beginning of his career, he was meek, humble, considerate, and self-restrained; but in the War of Independence he is impatient, imperious, cruel, and rash. And according to the Latin proverb, *Nemo repente turpissimus est*—no one becomes wicked all at once—the period of little more than a year is much too short to account for this baleful and disastrous change. As the sacred writers are in the habit of giving the age of each king, and the length of his reign—there are no fewer than thirty-seven illustrations of this in the Old Testament—it seems extremely probable that this was what was actually done in this passage. And I am convinced that the passage originally stood thus: "Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years over Israel." My reasons for thinking so are the following:—(1.) The testimony of Paul. He said to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch, in Pisidia: "And afterwards they asked for a king: and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years" (Acts xiii. 21.) (2.) The simple way in which the text might be corrupted. There is the strongest ground for believing that the numbers were originally written, not in words, but in letters which were used as numerals. (See Keil on Samuel in loco.) The Hebrew letter for forty was Mem, and for two Beth; and, as the two letters in the ancient Hebrew characters are not unlike, the copyist might easily mistake the one for the other, and put into the text the letter for two instead of the letter for forty. (3.) The period of forty years seems needful to account for all the facts of the history. It seems to explain best the age of Jonathan, the deterioration in the character of Saul, the abject condition of the country under the Philistines when the War of

Independence began, and the fact that Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, was forty years of age when he began to reign at Mahanaim (2 Sam. ii. 10). Saul might marry Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz, shortly after his confirmation in the kingdom; and from this union Jonathan might be born towards the close of the second year of Saul, the abject condition of the country under the Philistines when the War of Independence began, this national struggle would take place in the twenty-third year of Saul's reign. The contrast between this national gathering at Gilgal and that which took place when Saul was anointed king is very striking. Then there was a full muster, but now it is comparatively meagre. Then the people were flushed with victory, but now they are trembling with fear. Then the future was all bright, but now it is all dark, with hardly one gleam of hope. The truth seems to be that Saul's difficulty lay, not in forcing himself to act, but in restraining himself from acting for nearly the whole of the seven days. Saul's justification of himself was plausible, and might be deemed satisfactory before an earthly tribunal; but Samuel, who was inspired by the All-seeing One, treated it as altogether worthless. The kingdom, instead of descending to his eldest son, as it would have done, had he been faithful, was to be given to another whom God had chosen, and who was to be a man after His own heart. And if we are right in supposing that the War of Independence occurred in the twenty-third year of Saul's reign, David would then be a boy at Bethlehem about thirteen years of age (T. Kirk.)

Vers. 2—7. Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel.—*Aggression upon the camp of evil*:—The spiritual application of this incident teaches us that every man in the Church is a soldier acting under Divine leadership, or human leadership Divinely appointed, and that the solemn and unchangeable duty of the great army is to make daily aggression upon the whole camp of evil. The very existence of that camp should be regarded as a challenge. There need be no waiting for formal defiance; the Christian army is justified in regarding the existence of any form or colour of evil as a call to immediate onslaught. We fight not against men, but against their corruptions. We do not kill our brother men, we seek by Divine instrumentalities to slay the evils which have debased their manhood. There must be war in the world until all evil is driven out of it. Physical carnage is incompatible with the Spirit of Christ, and is, therefore ever to be regarded with horror and inexpressible detestation; but the grand spiritual war is never to cease until the last black spot of wickedness is taken away from the fair robe of the moral creation. Judging by what is seen in the spirit and action of nominal Christians, who could justly regard them as men of intrepidity and invincible resoluteness? What trembling, what hesitation, what nightmare fancies, what ghostly noises in the night, what nameless spectres have combined to make the Church afraid! What a genius the Church has for creating fears! How afraid the Church is of sensationalism, offending the weak, annoying the sensitive, disturbing the slumbering! What wonder if amid all this unworthy hesitation the war should be going against the Divine standard! But we must not look at the people: our eyes must be upon the Captain of our salvation. In his heart there is no misgiving; he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; he never turns back from the war; his sword is always highest in the air, pointing the road to danger and to victory. (J. Parker, D.D.)

Vers. 8—10. And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed.—*The impatience of man and the long-suffering of Christ* (with 1 Tim. 1. 16):—The figure of Samuel is scarcely ever presented to us alone. In childhood it is ever set in contrast with the wicked practices of those sons of Eli. Those young men defiled with sin the sanctuary of God: that child adhered to duty in the very presence of their ill example. In manhood and old age, the prophet is ever confronted with the king; the messenger sent to select, to anoint, to counsel, at last to warn and to reprove, to judge and to condemn, with the unhappy object of all these ministrations; whose advancement seemed in the foreview so full of honour and of happiness, but was made by his ungoverned temper and perverse self-will so ruinous to his own peace and to his people's welfare. The king had been expressly charged to await the coming of the prophet to offer an offering in Gilgal. It was a trial of fidelity and obedience. If Saul really believed that the direction was from God, and if he was really anxious to obey God, he would wait. If he allowed any other con-

siderations to come in, considerations of self-interest, of expediency, of what was reasonable or probable apart from the command, then, tried as he was to be, he would certainly anticipate the ceremony, and not wait. The seven days ran their course, and there was no sign of Samuel's approach. Meanwhile the people were discouraged. Accordingly the king's resolution gave way. There was some excuse, considerable temptation, no slight admixture of better motives, some superstition, some religion, some sense of the necessity of God's help, much neglect of God's directions as to the proper way of securing it. Saul's fell on this occasion through the operation of a principle (if so it can be called) which is natural to all of us, the principle of impatience. How many errors, faults, and sins, in our lives, spring out of this source! We scarcely ever do a thing (as we express it) in a hurry, without having afterwards to regret it. Nothing so done is likely to be well done. A thing may be done quickly, and well done, but not hurriedly, not in impatience. How many things have to be done twice over, because they were not done once quietly! Sometimes out of a little momentary act of haste springs a misunderstanding never to be cleared up, a quarrel never to be reconciled, an injustice never to be repaired. It is thus that impatience shows itself in the little daily acts of life: but it has a still more serious influence upon life's greater changes. Every condition of life has its less pleasant side: those who think they have a right to a portion wholly agreeable fret under these alloys of enjoyment, and can see almost nothing else in the lot assigned to them. Every rank and every age is liable to this feeling. A servant has become dissatisfied with his present position, and in the hurry of his impatience he suddenly resolves to make a change: how often, how often, for the worse! He has changed perhaps a kind master for one cold and considerate, a Christian home for a worldly, a safe place for one full of temptation, and in point of comfort, meanwhile, he has gained nothing. He would fain have returned, but the door is closed, and even if he could, pride would not let him. And how often has a man of mature age erred, and marred his life, through the very same impatience! Keenly alive to the trials of his present position he has greedily seized some opening for change. Bitterly may he one day regret that unthankful spirit of human impatience, which doubled the aggravations of the then known and present, and blinded him to the certain dangers of the then untried and future. But most of all is the working of this mind seen, as it was seen in King Saul, when there is not only a lurking imprudence but also a lurking disobedience. It was not merely that Saul was too much in a hurry, and did that precipitately which he might have done quietly: he showed the strength of his impatience by letting it interfere with and overbear a plain command of God. And how often now is the same sin committed! A man impatient of what is, is in no safe state for choosing what shall be. To say nothing of things positively forbidden, choices which can only be made by absolute sin, there are many things wrong for the individual though not wrong for another, and of which God, in the manifold workings of conscience and of His Spirit, leaves us not in ignorance or forgetfulness. But, like all God's admonitions, these may be overborne, and often are so. There is yet, perhaps, a just application of the history before us to the subject of human impatience in matters more entirely and purely spiritual. There is a strong yearning in the heart of man for the realisation of God. We long, and it is right to do so, for something more than a mere book-knowledge or a mere head-knowledge of Christ and of His salvation. We would believe, not because of the saying of another, but because we have seen Him for ourselves, and know that He is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. But O how many, in the sickness of a hope deferred, have at last discarded it; in the impatience of nature, they have said at last, The happiness, the blessedness, of a realised conviction is not for me: they have either ceased to look for it, and gone back into the world of sense and sin, or they have accepted some lie in its place; have put their trust in forms or in shadows, in things external and ceremonial. Thus, in one way or another, after waiting their seven days almost but not quite to a termination, they have despaired of the promised advent of comfort and illumination; they have seized some offering of their own, and offered it instead of that which God hath provided; they have satisfied conscience and stifled the Spirit. Human impatience has forced itself into things spiritual, and destroyed for the soul itself God's best and highest gift. I have reserved the last few words of my sermon for that beautiful and touching thought which should correct as well as contrast with the impatience of man, the thought, I mean, of the long-

suffering of Christ. St. Paul gives this as the object with which he, once a blasphemer and a persecutor, he the chief of sinners, had obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to those who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. If Jesus Christ were impatient like us, where should we be at this time—where, and what? His ways are not as our ways: if He dealt with us at all as the very best deal with one another, there is not a man upon earth who would live to grow up: one and twenty years of such provocation would be absolutely impossible. But to all things there is an end. A day of grace implies a morning, a mid-day, and an evening; implies too a deep dead midnight when all work has stood still, when all prayer is silent. Let patience have her perfect work, the patience of Christ which so long calls you to repentance. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *The trial of Saul:*—We are all on our trial. Every one who lives is on his trial, whether he will serve God or not. Saul is an instance of a man whom God blessed and proved, as Adam before him, whom He put on his trial, and who, like Adam, was found wanting. Before Saul went to battle, it was necessary to offer a burnt sacrifice to the Lord, and to beg of Him a blessing on the arms of Israel. He could have no hope of victory, unless this act of religious worship was performed. Now priests only and prophets were God's ministers, and they alone could offer sacrifice. Kings could not, unless they were specially commanded to do so by Almighty God. Saul had no leave to offer sacrifice; yet a sacrifice must be offered before he could fight; what must he do? He must wait for Samuel, who had said that he would come to him for that purpose. What a great trial this must have been! Here was a king who had been made king for the express purpose of destroying the Philistines; he is in the presence of his powerful enemy; he is anxious to fulfil his commission; he fears to fail; his reputation is at stake; he has at best a most difficult task, as his soldiers are very bad ones, and are all afraid of the enemy. His only chance, humanly speaking, is to strike a blow; if he delays, he can expect nothing but total defeat. Yet he is told to wait seven days; seven long days must he wait; he does wait them; and to his great mortification and despair, his soldiers begin to desert. Yet does he govern his feelings so far, as to wait all through the seven days. So far he acquits himself well in the trial; he was told simply to wait seven days, and in spite of the risk, he does wait. Though he sees his army crumbling away, and the enemy ready to attack him, he obeys God; he obeys His prophet; he does nothing; he looks out for Samuel's coming. But now, when his trial seemed over, behold a second trial—Samuel comes not. The prophet of God said he would come; the prophet of God does not come as he said. Why Samuel did not come, we are not informed; except that we see it was God's will to try Saul still further. O that he had continued in his faith! but his faith gave way, when his trial was prolonged. When Samuel did not come, there was no one of course to offer sacrifice; what was to be done? Saul ought to have waited still longer, till Samuel did come. He had had faith in God hitherto, he should have had faith still. He who had kept him so safely for seven days, why should He not also on the eighth? however, he did not feel this, and so he took a very rash and fatal step. That step was as follows: since Samuel had not come, he determined to offer the burnt sacrifice instead of him; he determined to do what he could not do without a great sin; viz., intrude into a sacred office to which he was not called; nay, to do what he really could not do at all; for he might call it a sacrifice, but it would not be really such, unless a priest or prophet offered it. This is a crime often denounced in Scripture, as in the case of Korah, and Jeroboam, and Uzziah. Korah was swallowed up by the earth on account of it; Jeroboam had his hand withered, and was punished in his family; and Uzziah was smitten with leprosy. Yet this was Saul's sin. You see, if he had waited but one hour more, he would have been saved this sin; in other words, he would have succeeded in his trial instead of failing. But he failed, and the consequence was, he lost God's favour, and forfeited his kingdom. How much is there in this melancholy history which applies to us at this day, though it happened some thousand years ago! We are, like Saul, favoured by God's free grace; and in consequence we are put on our trial like Saul—we are all tried in one way or another; and now consider how many there are who fall like Saul. 1. How many are there who, when in distress of any kind, in want of means, or of necessities, forget, like Saul, that their distress, whatever it is, comes from God; that God brings it on them, and that God will remove it in His own way, if they trust in Him: but who, instead of

waiting for His time, take their own way, their own bad ways, and impatiently hasten the time, and thus bring on themselves judgment! Sometimes, telling an untruth will bring them out of their difficulties, and they are tempted to do so. They make light of the sin; they say they cannot help themselves, that they are forced to it, as Saul said to Samuel; they make excuses to quiet their conscience; and instead of bearing the trial well, enduring their poverty, or whatever the trouble may be, they do not shrink from a deliberate lie, which God hears.

2. Again, how many are there who, when in unpleasant situations, are tempted to do what is wrong in order to get out of them, instead of patiently waiting God's time! What is this but to act like Saul? he had very little peace or quiet all the time he remained in presence of the enemy, with his own people falling away from him; and he, too, took an unlawful means to get out of his difficulty.

3. Again, how many are there who, though their hearts are not right before God, yet have some sort of religiousness, and by it deceive themselves into an idea that they are religious! Observe, Saul in his way was a religious man; I say, in his way, but not in God's way; yet his very disobedience he might consider an act of religion. He offered sacrifice rather than go to battle without a sacrifice. An openly irreligious man would have drawn up his army and fallen upon the Philistines without any religious service at all. Saul did not do this; he desired to have God's blessing upon him; and, while he felt that blessing to be necessary, he did not feel that the only way of gaining it was seeking it in the way which God had appointed. Thus he deceived himself; and thus many men deceive themselves now; not casting off religion altogether, but choosing their religion for themselves, as Saul did, and fancying they can be religious without being obedient.

4. Again, how many are there, who bear half the trial God puts on them, but not the whole of it; who go on well for a time, and then fall away! Saul bore on for seven days, and fainted not; on the eighth day his faith failed him. O, may we persevere to the end! Many fall away. Let us watch and pray.

5. Once more, how many are there, who, in a narrow, grudging cold-hearted way, go by the letter of God's commandments, while they neglect the spirit. Instead of considering what Christ wishes them to do, they take His words one by one, and will only accept them in their bare necessary meaning. They are wanting in love. Saul was told to wait seven days—he did wait seven days; and then he thought he might do what he chose. He, in effect, said to Samuel, "I have done just what you told me." And, in like manner, persons now-a-days, imitating him, too often say, when taxed with any offence, "Why is it wrong? Where is it so said in Scripture? Show us the text: "all which only shows that they obey carnally, in the letter and not in the spirit. How will all excuses, which sinners now make to blind and deaden their consciences, fail them in the Last Day! Saul had his excuses for disobedience. He did not confess he was wrong, but he argued; but Samuel with a word reproved, and convicted, and silenced, and sentenced him. And so in the Day of Judgment all our actions will be tried as by fire. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*)

The first wrong step:—At this first wrong step we are imperatively called to stay and investigate—for it was in Saul's case, as it has been in thousands of others—that the first digression from the course of integrity was ruinous. He never recovered himself; and the principles which were set going then are to be detected in active operation throughout the whole of his history.

I. THE NATURE OF THE SIN ITSELF DEMANDS EXPLANATION. We find Samuel saying to Saul, in prospect of the kingdom, "And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do." Now, from the whole tenor of the narrative, we conclude that this direction was not intended to apply to any one single occasion, but that it was to be a general rule for his guidance; that whenever a difficulty arose Saul was to proceed to Gilgal, as a place of religious resort, and to wait there for Samuel's arrival, which, he was given to understand, might not be until seven days had expired. Looking, then, at this requirement, we are at once struck with the abundant wisdom which is manifest in it. It was a simple but a very significant way of telling Saul that he was not an independent monarch—that he must not act as though he were—that as he was Divinely appointed, so he must consent to be Divinely guided—and that Samuel was to be the medium through which this guidance was to be obtained. This requirement, therefore, was a test by which it might be ascertained whether

or not there existed in Saul's bosom an acquiescence in God's plan. In the same way, all Divine precepts become tests of character. If they are followed out, they afford the proof of a spirit of obedience; if they are neglected, they expose the lurking spirit of opposition. And now the time of emergency had come—the Philistines were up in arms—the public danger was great. Saul is found at Gilgal—Samuel does not arrive—Saul is impatient. Not a moment longer will he wait. He did not mind running the risk of offending God: and he sure, that when even the possibility of doing wrong can be lightly viewed—when, there being a doubt even, we take advantage of that doubt to gratify our own passions, rather than act on the principle of denying ourselves in case we should be wrong—be sure, that when we do this, our hearts have begun to be callous, the searing process on our conscience has already commenced. And then, as it often happens in such cases, Saul had scarcely committed himself to the wrong course before he was detected. It is clear that his conscience told him that he was wrong, from the vain excuses which he made. He told Samuel that he did it reluctantly—"I forced myself." He charges Samuel with delay and want of punctuality—"Thou camest not within the days appointed." He assigned a religious motive—"I had not made my supplications to the Lord." Here we see that sort of special pleading which always shows a consciousness of guilt. II. **THIS FIRST WRONG STEP PROVED FATAL TO THE PROSPECTS OF SAUL.** Is it objected that the penalty was severe, for not waiting a little longer than he did, till Samuel arrived? We answer, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And though we should never volunteer a justification of the Divine proceedings as though they needed this, yet we may find that there is a power in such thoughts as the following, to throw light on the Divine dealings in this case. 1. Sin is not estimated by God according to its outward form, but according to the amount and extent of the principle of evil embodied in that form. There may be as much of downright rebellion against God in what men would call a little sin, as in a series of what they would describe as flagrant offences. 2. The first wrong step is always marked by a peculiarity of evil which does not attach to any subsequent offence. Men are accustomed to palliate the first offence, because it is the first: a more accurate estimate would show that this habit of judging is thoroughly erroneous and fallacious. There is more to keep a man from committing a first offence, than there is to keep him from committing a second or any subsequent criminal act. The impression of the command is at least one degree deeper than it can possibly be after it has been trifled with. The first sin involves the taking up of a new position, and this is harder work than to maintain it. It is assuming a character of disobedience, and this requires more hardihood than to wear it when it has been once put on. It is breaking through consistency, which is a strong barrier so long as it is unbroken; but if once broken through, sin becomes easy. It is the first offence in any particular direction which Satan aims at inducing us to commit; that sin committed, the habit of doing right is broken through, and the next offence in the same direction will be easier. It is to this point that he addresses his most specious plea, "Only this once,"—"The first time, and it will be the last." But did it ever prove to be the last? All history says, No; and loud, among other evidence, is the testimony of the narrative of Saul. Have we been brought into the right path, and tempted to forsake it, then be this our answer—"No! not even the first step will I venture again out of the path of duty." (*J. A. Miller.*) *Beginning of evil:*—There is a factory in France where spider-webs are regularly cultivated, and of the delicate fibres ropes for balloons for military purposes are constantly made. It seems almost incredible that so frail a thing can, by being multiplied, be made into a strong rope, strong enough to strangle a man; yet so it is. Cobwebs can now literally become cables. Sinful thoughts, shadowy and filmy at the first, may become so strong by constant indulgence that the strong cords of avarice, lust, hate, may at last bind the soul to its utter undoing. Beware of the beginnings of evil. (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Decline of soul:*—When a worm gets to the root of a delicate and sensitive plant, the first effect may only be a vague sense of general sickliness, a loss of brightness, an unhealthy drooping of the leaves. But if it remain it will by and by be the utter death of it. So when some secret sin is cherished in the soul, the idolatry of gold, some awful lust, or a bitter spirit of detraction or revenge, then there creeps over the religious life a general sickliness; the brightness of Divine gladness departs; spiritual interests begin to droop, and the whole soul becomes languid and weary. But if the evil be not removed, by and by there comes open

apostasy and blank denial and despair. Secret faults lead to presumptuous sins. May grace arrest the former, that we fall not into the latter. (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Loyalty essential to royalty*:—Saul was now to be taught that to be really royal a man must first be really loyal. Obedience is the first condition of rulership. There was no need for this usurpation of the priestly office on the part of Saul. It is at this point that so many mistakes are made, that men will imagine that the cause of God is in necessity, and will rush in a spirit of usurpation to do the work which God Himself has undertaken to be done by other hands. When will men learn to stand still, and in holy patience await the coming of the Lord? When will men give up the self-idolatry which supposes that unless they undertake to quicken the movements of Providence, the destinies of the universe will be imperilled? The worship of patience may be more accepted than the service of rashness. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed.**—*Principle and expediency*:—What a solemn and impressive condemnation have we here of that far too common practice—deserting principle to serve expediency. I don't like to tell a lie, some one may say, but if I had not done it I should have lost my situation. I dislike common work on the Sabbath day, but if I did not do it I could not live. I don't think it right to go to Sunday parties or to play games on Sundays, but I was invited by this or that great person to do it, and I could not refuse him. I ought not to adulterate my goods, and I ought not to give false statements of their value, but every one in my business does it, and I cannot be singular. What do these vindications amount to, but just a confession that from motives of expediency God's commandment may be set aside? (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Waiting the Lord's time*:—Unbelief is always in a hurry, cannot wait the appointed time, will snatch at unripe fruit, and in deed, if not in words, proclaim itself wiser than God, and better able to determine times and seasons. Faith is a lovely, quiet, waiting grace; and taking its rest on infinite wisdom, and boundless love, whether the Lord gives or denies, cheerfully exclaims, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." If this be faith, you will readily perceive the need of that prayer, "Increase our faith." It is easy for us to blame Saul, but are we sure we should not have made haste under such circumstances? He had waited till the seventh day; Samuel was not come, and "the people were scattered from him." Sometimes we think, if I could just see a glimpse of hope—a prospect of an opening—the least sound of a distant moving for my help; but seeing is not believing—believing is hoping for that which we see not; yea, "against hope believing in hope." The furnace for faith must be heated to this point, or it is not sufficient to prove that it is real faith. Sense might have waited till the seventh day; but to wait till the close of the seventh day without an appearance of help, yea, with all appearances against it, this required a faith to which poor Saul was a stranger. He would fain have had Samuel come within the time appointed. Samuel would not come until the time, but at the set time he came. The seventh day was not expired, for as soon as ever Saul's unholy sacrifice had been offered, behold, Samuel appeared. The Lord grant us more of this patient waiting upon Him! this assurance that He will come and will not tarry. He who made haste to be everything, shall now be nothing. (*Helen Plumptre.*) *Awaiting God's time*:—Good old Spurstow says that "some of the promises are like the almond-tree—they blossom hastily in the very earliest spring; but," saith he, "there are others which resemble the mulberry-tree—they are very slow in putting forth their leaves." Then what is a man to do, if he has a mulberry-tree promise, which is late in blossoming? Why, he is to wait till it does blossom; since it is not in his power to hasten it. If the vision tarry, exercise the precious grace called patience, and the appointed time shall surely bring you a rich reward. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. **I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.**—*The right and the wrong of Saul's conduct*:—"I forced myself therefore"; "could not help it"; "my poverty but not my will consents." This not tenable in Christian morality. (Rom. xii. fn.; 1 Cor. x. 13.) The prophet was mouth-piece of Divine law: the king its administrator and executor. Prophet superior to king in respect of religious observances. Saul's difficulty continually recurs. plain commands of God not to be slighted or disobeyed for less plain ones.

In this incident we find something right in Saul, and something wrong. I. WHERE SAUL WAS RIGHT. He was in great distress, and felt need of Divine aid. (Ps. lx. 11.) He was for seeking it in ordinances appointed. Christ's sacrifice on cross our great peace offering, to be presented in faithful, intelligent prayer. (St. John xiv. 6 fin.) Do not stay at a mere dull, diffused sense of wanting pardon. So, if need enlightenment, seek it in Holy Scripture (St. John v. 39); if spiritual refreshment, at Holy Communion. Ordinances have their proper value, rightly used. Thus Saul was right. II. WHERE SAUL WAS WRONG. Elements of his fault: Want of faith; contrast Gideon (Is. xxviii. 16); superstition as to sacrifice. Nowadays, many value ordinance of religion quite independently of state of heart in the person using it. Saul relied on the form only. "Sacrifice must be offered!" No! It is not the objective but the subjective that is of highest importance; the formal is useless without the spiritual. Heart first. (Is. i. 10-20; James iv. 3; St. John iv. 24; Ps. li. 9, 10). Saul misapprehended the object and effect of religious ordinances. It is not the thing done, but the obedient spirit of the doer which obtains. (Ps. l. 13). No mechanical influence upon God by prayer, &c. Ordinances are not charms, but channels of grace when rightly used. Therefore Saul disobeyed. Sin never necessary. Contrary notion arises from cowardice, or from superstition, or from some other want of intelligence. Since Saul's fault was superstitious distrustfulness, seek from Holy Spirit an intelligent reliance on the general promises of God, and an intelligent obedience to the plain commands. (*Cornelius Witherby, M.A.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord.**—*Folly illustrated by the character of Saul:*—We perhaps, had we possessed no ulterior information, might have been disposed to expect that, when the Searcher of hearts cast His eye over the twelve tribes in quest of a man whom He might appoint to be ruler over His people; He would select one conspicuous for piety, and prepared by steadfast faith to meet the trials with which his exaltation would be attended. Yet why should we have expected such a choice? Is it the established order of Providence that piety should be recompensed by elevation to dignity and power? Are the rulers of the earth, whether in Pagan or in Christian lands, whether God raises them to empire by the settled course of succession, or by the storms of warfare and revolutions, usually eminent for religion beyond the mass of their subjects? The thoughts of the Most High are not as our thoughts. He knows by what governor, in any particular nation and at any particular time, His Own secret and righteous purposes, whether of mercy or of vengeance, will be most efficaciously promoted. I purpose to lay before you the leading circumstances in the conduct of Saul: and afterwards to deduce, for your edification, some of the inferences which they suggest. I. IN THE EARLY BEHAVIOUR OF SAUL, after the period when he is introduced in the Scriptures to our notice, THERE IS MUCH TO PREPOSSESS US IN HIS FAVOUR. The fruit, however, corresponds little with the blossom. The impressions produced by early symptoms in Saul of moderation and of respect for his sovereign Benefactor are soon to be effaced. Though Saul by his disobedience respecting the sacrifice has incurred the forfeiture of the kingdom, yet God, ever merciful and long-suffering, forbears to commission Samuel to anoint a successor to the throne, and is willing to grant to the unworthy prince an opportunity of reinstating himself in the Divine favour. Samuel, by the direction of the Most High, now commands Saul to execute the long predicted vengeance. To the conduct of Saul throughout the whole of this transaction can a name more appropriate than folly be ascribed? Can any fact be ascertained more clearly than the identity of folly and sin? Saul is now an outcast from the Divine favour. He is permitted to retain the kingdom during his life; but judgment in its most terrible form delays not to overtake him. The Spirit of the Lord departs from him. How shall the life of Saul be summarily described? I have sinned; I have played the fool; I have erred exceedingly. Whose are these words? The words of Saul himself in his latter days. Do you require stronger testimony to the identity of folly and sin? II. From the foregoing history, SEVERAL IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS MAY BE DERIVED. 1. We learn, in the first place, not to repose blind and premature confidence on some few promising appearances as to piety. Let every symptom favourable to the supposition that religion is the ruling principle in the character of another be cordially welcomed, and judiciously encouraged. But learn to guard your willing hopes from degenerating into san-

guine credulity. Conceive not that examples of religious consideration on some particular occasions are proofs that religion is firmly and durably established in the bosom. Gold is not known to be genuine, until it has stood the test of fire. The crop is not estimated by the blade, but by the harvest. Wait until religion has for some time been tried by the temptations of life, before you pronounce on its reality. 2. Consider in the next place the guilt of impatiently endeavouring to attain a present good by departing from the way of God's commandments. Everything which is not conformable to His revealed will is evil. Are you involved in difficulty or trouble? Abide thou in the track of righteousness. This is the way. Walk thou in it. Turn not aside to the right hand or to the left. Abide thou in the track of righteousness: wait thou the time of the Most High, and in His Own time and by the track of righteousness the Most High shall guide thee to peace and to salvation. 3. Behold, thirdly, the guilt of rash resolutions and vows. In concerns of importance that which is resolved hastily is commonly resolved foolishly. But whenever, like Saul, a person forms a determination, or fetters himself by an engagement, under the precipitate impulse of passion, seldom shall a considerable time elapse before he perceives reason for deep and lasting regret. 4. Mark the heinousness of fearing man rather than God. What sin is more general? What sin is more conspicuously arrayed in the attributes of folly? 5. Lastly, let the example of Saul admonish you to frequent meditation on the consequences of disobeying God. (*Thomas Gisborne, M.A.*) *The great test of character*:—Michael Angelo once went into the studio of a young artist who had just executed a statue to stand in the public square. Angelo saw its grave defects, and pointed them out to his friend. The exultant artist did not appreciate the criticism of his work, and supposed the greater man to be moved with envy. So he told him, in the dim obscurity of his workshop he could not see the defects which were so apparent to the aged critic, and in passion sneered at the opinion given. "Well," said Angelo, not the least disturbed, "the light of the public square will test it." "The light of the public square will test it." Ah, yes! The light of the public square is to test every human life. Eternal blaze shall pour upon it, and defects unseen by the poorer light of earth will grow to ghastly deformities. The light of the public square will test it! *The prophet rebuking the king*:—It is never easy, and it is always unpleasant, to become a rebuker; and when the transgressor is wealthy, or noble, or royal, the difficulty of faithfulness is enhanced. It requires considerable courage and great boldness in the faith for a man of God to reprove a king in whose hands may be his life. Many have had to imperil their lives in the discharge of this duty. Some have attributed rudeness and insolence to John Knox, because he spoke the truth to the bigoted Queen Mary of Scotland; but it required courage to tell royalty that she ought to obey God. Had Saul but waited, he might have spared his soul this guilt, and Samuel would have stood at the altar and spoken authoritatively for God! But he took the step of sin, and was ensnared in its wiles. He took the first false step in his public career, and his future was an incline to his tragic end. It was his first false step. The embankment of a river can keep out the waters even though they swell and beat; but if a single orifice be opened, how soon do they rush in, and sweep all away, and scatter ruin around. Such is the first sin. It is as the letting out of water. Let the reader beware of the first wrong step. It has wrecked many a soul. It has caused many domestic griefs, darkened the fairest prospects, and withered the most promising expectations. It has sent young men into a career of dishonesty which ended in a prison, and young women into shame and the streets. It has induced apostasy from the faith, and made the professor a reprobate. This first wrong step is often the crisis of a career. It is not the mere earliest development of iniquity. That comes out with our natural character; but this is the test of our good resolution, or of our profession. When a young man is intrusted with money, and is tempted to dishonesty; when a daughter is enticed by the spoiler, and is tempted to yield; when a professor has been at the table of the Lord, and is called to take up his cross; when a convalescent has to decide whether he will act upon the serious thoughts of eternity and the earnest purposes of soul which marked his illness; when a convicted soul has his old sin alluring him again;—these are times when a false step may prove the beginning of sins and sorrows. 2. He had acted foolishly. This was more than thoughtlessness. It was disobedience. "There are," says Dr. Kitto, "two kinds of fools prominently noticed in Scripture,—the fool who denies that there is any God,—the fool that saith in

his heart, 'There is no God,'—a text which suggests the remark, that if he is a fool who says this 'in his heart,' a much greater fool is he that utters the foolish thought. This is one. There is another,—the fool who does not obey God, though he does not deny His existence. And yet, after all, these are but one. If we probe the matter closely, we shall find that there is scarcely more than an impalpable film of real difference between the foolishness of the man who says in his heart there is no God, and that of the man who does not render Him obedience. One may as well believe that there is no God, as not obey Him.

3. The conduct of Saul was the test of his dynasty. He failed, therefore he was cut off. His house was doomed by reason of his sin. His kingdom could not be established. Samuel made the announcement of his fall to the guilty king: "Now thy kingdom shall not continue." It was not to be an absolute monarchy. It was to be dependent on the will of God, and thus far constitutional to the people. But Saul was not equal to the task of forming a model monarchy for the people of God. He had ability enough, but he lacked principle. He had advantages enough, but he lacked loyalty to God. Therefore, his dynasty was to cease in himself. On first sight, the offence seems small and the punishment heavy. And the question may arise, "Why did God so severely punish Saul for so small an offence, and that occasioned by great necessity, and done with an honest intention, as he professed?" Pool has given the following answer: "First, men are very incompetent judges of God's judgments. Men see nothing but Saul's outward act, which seems small; but God saw with how wicked a mind and heart he did this; with what rebellion against the light of his own conscience, as his own words imply; with what gross infidelity and distrust of God's Providence; with what contempt of God's authority and justice,—and many other wicked principles and motives of his heart, unknown to men. Besides, God saw all that wickedness that yet lay hid in his heart, and foresaw all his other crimes; and therefore had far more grounds for his sentence against him than we can imagine. Secondly, God doth sometimes punish small sins severely, and that for divers weighty reasons; as that all men may see what the least sin deserves, and how much they owe to God's free and rich mercy for passing by their great offences; and what need they have not to indulge themselves in any small sin, as men are very prone to do, upon vain presumptions of God's mercy, whereby they are easily and commonly drawn on to heinous crimes. 4. Conformity to the heart of God is necessary to the soul's blessedness. This was its original beatitude, and this is the result of regeneration. Without holiness we cannot see or enjoy God. The man after God's heart only can enjoy the bliss of fellowship with God. "This likeness is a vital image—not the image only of Him that lives, the living God, but it is His living and soul-quickening image. It is the likeness of Him in that very respect, an imitation and participation of the life of God, by which, once revived, the soul lives that was dead before. It was not a dead picture, a dumb show, an unmoving statue; but a living, speaking, walking image,—that wherewith the child is like the Father, and by which it lives as God, speaks and acts conformably to him; an image, not such a one as is drawn with a pencil, that expresses only colour and figure, but such a one as is seen in a glass that represents life and motion. The hope of being thus like God gives energy to the Christian in his struggles with sin, and attraction to the many-mansuoned home. This conformity is attainable in character, and it is more promotive of bliss than intellect or power. We can be born again. This experience is the introduction of the soul to the life of God. The man after God's own heart was to be the captain over His people. Saul was quite unfit for this. David was the elect of God. His heart was right. (R. Steel.)

But now thy kingdom shall not continue.—*Severe punishment for seemingly small sins:*—Sometimes God punishes small sins severely, and such are set down in scripture record, for weighty reasons. As—1. To teach us the heinous nature of sin in its self, so hateful to God, and so hurtful to men, that we may abhor all the degrees of it. 2. To show us, that indeed no sin can truly be called a little sin, because there is no little God to sin against; therefore to disobey the great God even in the smallest matters is a ground great enough, and a sin great enough to procure God's severity. 3. That we may not indulge ourselves in the least sin, as we are prone to do in presuming on God's mercy, lest God punish us for them, and lest little sins make way for greater, as little wedges make room for the more massive ones, and little thieves serve to open the doors for the grand crew. 4. That we may all learn the riches of Divine grace and free mercy, in passing by and

pardoning such great iniquities in us, when we find the rigour of justice executed upon others for far lesser faults recorded in scripture. 5. That an honest intention will not warrant an unwarrantable action, as some suppose Saul had in sacrificing; two things make a godly man, good actions and good aims. (*C. Ness.*) *The doom of the unfaithful instrument*:—The king, one whose character faithfully represented their own national character and desires. Like his people, he leaned to an arm of flesh. Their sin in desiring his rule was his sin in the conduct of that rule. In his darkening course and fearful end was exhibited to them that law of God's dealings of which their own national history was to be to all ages the most marvellous example whereby His chosen instruments, who refuse to fulfil the end for which He raises them up, are cast down into darkness, and their opportunity of service is given to another. In all this, so far as individuals go, the lesson is plain and inevitable. It is a law of that unseen but most certain dominion which even here, amidst the blinding showers which conceal His immediate working, the Most High is administering, that they who being set anywhere to do His will neglect to do it, are replaced by other and more faithful instruments. This is an universal and eternal law. It was evidently thus that He dealt with the chosen people, who in this, as in so many respects, were the pattern nation. What else but a declaration of this truth is their whole history as it is recorded by inspired annalists and interpreted by gifted prophets? How is this written in every page of the record of God's dealings with them, down to that last sentence of rejection pronounced by the mouth of the Apostle Paul, when charging on themselves the guilt of their own blood, he said, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Here then we may see the same righteous hand which wasted Jerusalem overturning the great Assyrian Nineveh. The same law which first exalted and then cast down the chosen people reached also to the great empires of the heathen world. They rose because they were commissioned to do a certain work; they fell, not by any mere natural process of decay, but under the weight of God's judicial sentence, executing itself through the permitted action of these secondary causes. And now let me ask you to apply this principle to our own country, and its prospects at this moment. 1. Are there then any tokens which specially mark out for us our appointed work? Now to answer this question we must glance at those distinctive features of our national life which sever us from other people. The first of these is our insular position; for this at once confines us within narrow bounds at home, and facilitates the formation of those distant settlements by which alone we can provide for increasing numbers. Further, the same cause makes it well-nigh impossible that we should be a great military nation, and naturally leads, as the condition of national defence, to our becoming strong in naval power. Further, the natural characteristics of our people tend to produce the same result. In many of the highest gifts bestowed on other tribes of men we are manifestly deficient. We have not the keen sense of beauty which has ere now enabled Greece and even Rome to exalt our race. But we have the gifts of a hardy, industrious, enterprising genius. We are fitted, apparently by innate disposition, to be great subduers of nature's rebellious and reluctant but conquerable powers. And when any external agency has threatened to destroy these powers, as when Spain and its Armada, or France at the head of a continual system of exclusion, would have destroyed our naval greatness, some direct interpositions of Providence have thwarted their designs. The natural course of such influences has led us on, first to the establishment of distant factories, and then to those factories growing into settlements, and from them turning into colonies, which have sometimes grown into mighty nations. Now what special charge would such a national organisation seem naturally to suggest as having been providentially committed to our hands? Surely at once it suggests that we are to be employed by God as the bearers of some message to every race and tribe. Not more evidently does the possession of great military power wielded by a single despotic will, mark a people as charged with the avenger's office; not more evidently do eminent gifts of genius mark a nation as charged to educate its brethren, than do our special faculties, instincts, and relations to the great family of man mark us as the bearers of some message through the world. What then can be the message to bear which we have been so eminently fitted? Let the spiritual blessings God has given us supply the answer to this question. 2. And if here we pause but for one moment, to ask how we, as a nation, have fulfilled this our vocation, how appalling is the answer! Have we not encircled the earth with the girdle

of our settlements? Is it not true that as from east to west the morning sun awakens to new life the successive nations, the drum roll of English soldiers follows round the world its rising light? And what, with all this, have we done for God? Alas, how tardy, how scanty, how interrupted, how unsystematic, how timid, how faithless have been our services! How readily and how plentifully have we sown our vices and diseases broadcast over a suffering world! How feebly, alas, have we planted amongst its nations the living seed of God's truth in God's Church! If it be so with us, why tarries yet the day of retribution, why sleep the thunders of judgment? Is our present prosperity but the deep calm before the wild triumph of the hurricane? God only knows, my brethren, how close to us may be that fearful time of uttermost rejection. If to our startled gaze were now opened revelations such as those which fell at Patmos on the beloved St. John, we perhaps might see the mighty angels of vengeance withholding, but as for a moment, the four winds of heaven, to see whether Britain would repent and do God's work. Here then plainly is our nation's calling and our nation's risk. 3. And if this indeed be our vocation, what are the especial duties binding upon us if we would rise up to its greatness? May it please God to bring them home in all their power to some who listen to them. Now beyond all question the first of all requisites for the delivery of such a message is that we have received it thoroughly ourselves. Here then, alike for the teacher and the taught, is our first necessity; that the truth of God in all its purity, with a loving spirit and a patient reiteration, be proclaimed and inculcated; that every lawful means be used, in season and out of season, to reproduce amongst ourselves men of the true apostolic stamp. Next to this we need to learn to feel, and to make others feel, how mighty are the issues for our own people, and for a waiting world, which hang on our fidelity or faithlessness. (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*) **The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart.**—*The man after God's own heart*:—The simple earnest Christian has read and learnt the Psalms of David with the greater care, and has loved them the more dearly because the sweet Psalmist of Israel was declared to be after the mind of God: and on the other hand the scoffer has pointed to David's grievous sins, and asked with scorn whether such things are the deeds of the man after God's own heart. I propose to offer to you some remarks upon the meaning of David's noble title, and to show you how he deserved it. And this I shall do principally by contrasting his character with that of Saul, a contrast which is made in the text, and which is in fact the basis of the title applied to David. And this point I must beg you especially to bear in mind, if you would understand the text aright, namely, that David is not called the man after God's own heart as distinguished from all other good men; it is not asserted that David was on the whole the purest and best man who ever lived. David is described there as being after the Lord's own heart specially in opposition to Saul, who was very far from being after the mind of God. Saul was a wilful disobedient man, the text was spoken to him on occasion of his disobedience. And if he did such things in the green tree, what would he do in the dry? if he thus ran riot while the oil of consecration was almost fresh upon him, what would he do when his kingdom was established and he became puffed up by his power? Do you not see then, that Saul had showed himself radically unfit for the charge of the Israelitish people? and therefore Samuel was charged to convey to him the voice of reproof and warning, and to tell him that whereas he had shown himself to be a man wilful and disobedient, God would not continue the kingdom to him, but would give it to a man after His own heart,—His own heart (that is) especially in those very points in which Saul had failed. Now let me contrast a little more carefully the characters of Saul and David. I should say, that the basis of the character of the two men was exactly opposite in one to what it was in the other; and if I can show you, that the basis of the character of one was pleasing to God, and that of the other hateful to Him, then you will not be surprised that the one should be spoken of as being after the mind of God, while the other was rejected from being king. Observe, I am not saying that there may not be some passages in David's life very bad and disgraceful, and some in Saul's very good; but I am maintaining that the roots of their characters were different, the one being faith in God, the other faith in man, and that in the main the life of David was a life of faith and obedience, that of Saul one of godless independence. It would not be possible for me to call up all the passages in David's life which would illustrate the point which we have in hand;

but I would refer you to those writings of his, in which he has given us a transcript of his own mind. The Psalms of David present to us a more vivid picture than can perhaps be anywhere else found of a mind waiting upon God, looking away from itself, trusting in Him, blessing Him in trouble and blessing Him in prosperity, of a mind of which the motive principle is evidently faith in God and submission to Him. It is true that we may find in David's life at least one very fearful stain. I suppose that never was sin committed which brought such lasting contempt upon piety as that fearful fall of David; but even in this case let us look to David's own record of his feelings, when repentance and sorrow had enabled him to see his crime in its true colours, and we shall see what a deep view he took of his sin, and what an intolerable burden it was to him. You must remember that David suffered most severely in this world for his sin. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." You see here how every other view of sin vanishes before this, the view of it as against God; a man's vice may bring wretchedness on himself, it may ruin his health, it may bring him to beggary; and these views are very true and in their proper place valuable, but he who looks upon wickedness as God looks upon it, must see it in the light in which it appeared to David; he may regard it as noxious in itself, he may lament the unhappiness which it causes, but he regards it emphatically as sin because it is against God. Thus looking upon the character of David, I seem to see that of a man whose heart was in a very wonderful degree right with God; a man not perfect indeed, for none is perfect, and least of all must we look for Christian perfection under the imperfect dispensation of the old Covenant; but still of a man whose chief characteristics were faith in God, zeal for the honour of God, and humble submission to the will of God. And therefore I do not wonder that Samuel, as contrasting him with Saul, should describe him in the text as after God's own heart; for these are the characters of mind, which, whether in a king of Israel or in an Englishman of our own days, must ever be the source and spring of all that is pleasing to God. But now for a moment let us look at Saul. Without wishing to depreciate such good qualities as he might possess, I think one may justly hold him forth as a specimen of a man self-dependent, wilful, eminently deficient in those qualities which form the beauty of David's character, faith in God, humble waiting upon Him, quiet submission to Him. And when we contrast the two characters as I have sketched them to you, you will I think easily see, how, without speaking slightly of David's sin, we may nevertheless say with truth, that his character in the main features of it was peculiarly after the mind of God, and that David may be rightly spoken of as a man after the Lord's own heart. I have been endeavouring to show you from the example of David, what is the character of mind which God loves; God loves the man who is ever looking to and leaning upon Him, who has His honour ever in his mind, who thinks little of his own personal convenience and advantage, and delights rather to worship God; and God does not love the man who ever seeks himself, the man of irreverent mind, who exalts himself above God, and the world present above the world to come; whatever qualities such an one may have which may make him popular or powerful in the world, God who knows the heart estimates such a man's deeds as those of Saul, and rejects them. (*H. Goodwin, M.A.*) *Saul and David*:—The widely different judgments which Holy Scripture leads us to form respecting Saul and David is a subject which occupies much attention when we are reading the first book of Samuel. The impression which Saul makes upon an average reader, at least at first, is beyond all question a favourable impression. The salient points of his character engage our sympathy, and this sympathy is deepened when we consider the misfortunes of his later life and its tragic close. Saul, indeed, had many of those qualifications which always go to make a man popular. Of the higher qualities of Saul's natural character which inspires this affection the first was, I do not say his humility, but his modesty. Modesty, unlike humility, is not inconsistent with certain forms of pride; and it is a natural virtue which is good as far as it goes, and which is always attractive. Saul was modest. It is plain from the account of his elevation to the throne that he had no wish for such a position. When a number of his new subjects despised him, and, failing in the ordinary usage of Eastern courtesy, brought him no presents, he betrayed no annoyance or irritation; "he held his peace." Closely allied to this modesty was his capacity for generosity towards opponents. Certainly, Saul was much besides all this; he was proud, he was reserved, he was obstinate, he was haughty in his

later years, he was a prey to the most capricious and irrational jealousy; but, especially in his early life, he had qualities which are always valued and valuable, and which explain the affection with which he was regarded by those who knew him. Moreover, his reign was, on the whole, and in a civil or political sense, of benefit to his country, and yet with this personal character and this note of God's assistance—for such it was under the old covenant—Saul had upon him, almost from the first, the presentiments of disaster and ruin. When we turn to David we find it difficult, at first, to explain this phrase—the man after the heart of God—thus used by Samuel by way of contrast to Saul, for David's feelings are written much in the page of Holy Scripture, and they seem, at first sight, to make such an expression unintelligible, or, at least, exaggerated. In point of natural excellence, Saul and David had, at least, while each was a young man, several points in common. If David could not rival Saul's stature, his activity and his muscular strength were exceptional; his feet, he tells us, were like the feet of the gazelle; his arms could break even a bow of steel. Both Saul and David were men of personal prowess and of personal courage, and David resembled Saul in his modest estimate of himself, and in his generous conduct upon occasions towards others. But there are dark traits in David which the Bible makes no attempts to disguise. Nothing in the annals of Oriental courts can well exceed the baseness of his intrigue with Bathsheba and the cowardly murder of Uriah. Rarely has cruelty towards a conquered enemy been greater than that with which David treated the Ammonites, and although another side of his failings has been much exaggerated by some ancient and by several modern critics, there are traces of deceitfulness in David which recall his ancestor Jacob, and which impair the nobility and the beauty of the general impression he leaves with us. And yet in contrast with Saul he has on him from the first the notes of God's special approval; his trials and misfortunes only established or renewed his prosperity; his long persecution by Saul leads to his succession to the throne; Absalom's rebellion only makes his rule more secure than ever in Jerusalem. All through there is upon David a presentiment of acceptance, just as upon Saul, especially as the years pass on, there is more and more plainly stamped a note of reprobation. If it seems at first sight that there is something arbitrary in the different estimates that Holy Scripture itself leads us to form of Saul and David, let us look once more hard at Saul, and let us ask ourselves what it is that is especially wanting in him. Is it not this, that Saul, so far as the Bible account of him goes, gives no evidence of having upon and within him the permanent influence of religion, of anything that we could call the fear and love of God in his heart? And the same temper is observable in Saul when he was ordered to go and smite the sinners of the Amalekites and utterly destroy them and their cattle. The first particular of his disobedience was occasioned by his wish to be popular, he "feared the people and obeyed their voice"; the second was probably due to his feeling for a brother monarch—a feeling which, however natural at other times, ought not to have arrested obedience to a Divine command. Certainly, Saul's conduct in respect of Agag did not arise from any unwillingness on his part to shed blood. He had no such scruples to prevent him from attempting the extermination of the Gibeonites, although they ought in his eyes to have been protected by Joshua's oath, which pledged their safety in the midst of Israel. The truth was that he was at heart indifferent to the command of God, and thought himself at liberty to disobey just as much of it as the feeling or convenience of the moment might suggest. And it is no objection to this view of Saul's mind, as in reality unconcerned with the claims of God and with the unseen world, that he showed himself anxious for some superhuman guidance when on the eve of his death he stole round the base of little Hermon to endeavour to consult the witch. We see the same thing every day of our lives. Men who have scornfully rejected the Christian revelation are constantly haunted by weird or grotesque superstitions. The human soul is made for faith in the unseen, and if its deep craving be not satisfied by the one supreme reality of what He has told us about Himself, it will seek satisfaction in quarters which faith would condemn more earnestly than reason. Now it was precisely in this respect that Saul presents so great a contrast to David. David, in spite of his grievous faults, had upon his heart and conscience continually the impress, awful, yet most fascinating, of the majesty, the beauty, the encompassing presence, the boundless magnificence of God. This great possession remained with him throughout his life. He has admitted us to the secrets of his soul at almost

every stage of his eventful history. David associates us with his experiences not only in his triumphs, but in his deep and unspeakable humiliations. We know what he feels and thinks after his sin with Bathsheba, what he feels and thinks as he flies a dishonoured exile before his rebellious son. And he is always true to this ruling characteristic of his life. When in his fear or his exaltation, in his penitence or in his joy, in his struggles or in his repose, in thought or in action, God has the first place in his intellect; God's approval, God's condemnation, God's works, God's will are ever his first concern. This, the preoccupation of his life, makes him, even in the camp or on the throne, a sort of enthusiast, on whom the outward world sits lightly, and who cares not for its unfavourable opinion if only he is loyal to his unseen and awful Master. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." One cannot imagine these words in the mouth of Saul, the cool-headed man of the world, conducting himself as did David when the ark was moved in state from the house of Obed-edom, near Kirjath-jearim, to Jerusalem. This is the reason why David is called, in contrast to Saul, "the man after God's own heart." Certainly, David's sins were not after God's own heart. May He forgive the blasphemy that would suggest that they were! But beyond and beneath those sins there was a permanent character of soul-instinct with the fear and with the love of God that survived and conquered them. There was, so far as we know or can conceive, nothing corresponding to this in Saul. There is, indeed, no event in Saul's life which is at once so cruel and so base as David's sin with the wife of the murdered Uriah; but then there was nothing in Saul that could have issued forth as David's heart-broken repentance. It is the difference between cold, tranquil, decorous indifference to the real claims of God upon a human life, and a fear of God and a love of God which are upon the whole of the governing forces of the soul. Saul and David are lasting types of human character. Saul and David live in their representatives at the present day. Lives on the whole decorous, illustrated even by undoubted and high natural virtues, but based on a deep, if not a reasoned, indifference to the will of God—such lives are lived side by side with lives open to grave criticism on account of conspicuous failings, yet based at bottom on a true fear and love of God, which lasts on under and in spite of the imperfection of the service which is rendered to Him. Saul is the more popular character with the world at large. The world likes his mixture of generosity and haughtiness, his jaunty carelessness about all that points to the mystery and the responsibilities of life. David, too, is unquestionably vulnerable and keen sighted, and unfriendly critics are always hard at work upon the inconsistencies which they detect between his practice and his professions. Nevertheless, my brethren, it is better to have our part with David than with Saul; with a loyalty to God which is not always consistent, rather than with an outward propriety, if so be that it is never really loyal. (*Canon Liddon*.) *A man after God's Own heart*:—I. IT IS PLAIN BY A REFERENCE TO THE CONTEXT THAT THE TITLE "AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART" WAS ONLY COMPARATIVE, NOT ABSOLUTE. Meant that, by the side of Saul, David was the man who attracted favour and confidence of God. The faith by which he walked with God; gained the victory over Goliath; became at all worthy to be God's viceroy; remained unconquered, though not unhurt, through many a defeat and fall, through a life-long struggle. II. TITLE WAS GIVEN HIM IN EARLY DAYS, BEFORE HIS LIFE HAD BECOME OVERCAST WITH THE CLOUD OF SIN AND ERROR. "The Lord hath sought Him a man," &c. And when God found him he was still the David of the 23rd Psalm. Do not say that God did not love him after his fall, or did not give him large praise until his death, and after his death. But he is certainly never called the man after God's own heart again. III. DAVID'S REPENTANCE WAS FAR MORE DEEP THAN APPEARS ON THE SURFACE OF THE NARRATIVE. How deep and true it was we know from 51st Psalm, which has supplied so many millions of penitent souls with very words they wanted. IV. IT IS MOST NECESSARY TO BEAR IN MIND, IN CONSIDERING THE CAREER OF DAVID, THE SEVERITY OF PUNISHMENT WHICH FOLLOWED UPON DAVID'S SIN. Let any one look at David's old age, and say whether the justice of God is not an inexorable and an awful thing. For every sin there is forgiveness, but for all that it may be that every sin leaves its mark, its effect for ill. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *David*:—By this glowing announcement of a "Coming Man" our expectations and our curiosity are naturally raised to the highest pitch. And I daresay that if we read it in a modern three-volume book without any knowledge of intervening occurrences, we should look on to the end

of the third volume to know at once whether he was supposed to have realised the ideal. If we did so, we should find an answer in the affirmative. The main question to which I propose to address myself is this. Can God ever express his approval of the whole character of a man who has committed the blackest sin which history records or which the imagination can picture? In approaching the question I must ask you to bear in mind the immense difference between looking back at a sin and looking forward to the self-same sin. A good deal of the genuine perplexity about the case before us is caused, I am sure, by forgetting this. Men commonly think that David was necessarily a bad man, because they think, and rightly think, that they should certainly be bad men if they proposed to themselves to commit the sin which David committed. But we cannot fairly argue thus and say, "If David was a man after God's own heart, it follows that such a complication of sins as he committed is no hindrance to God's favour." It is not fair to argue thus. Why not? Because the whole of the case is not stated. The fair argument from David's case is this, "If David was on the whole a good man, it follows that great sin, followed by deep and lifelong repentance, does not exclude from God's favour, and His approval of the character as a whole." Put it thus: We see as a fact, now that the result is before us, that David did repent and was accepted. If the history had stopped short at the account of his sin, and there were no favourable notices of him, then we could not assume that he had repented. Again, if we read that he sinned deliberately, trusting in the mercy of God and fully intending to repent, then we could have but one opinion of him; and if, in that case, he were mentioned with commendation or anything remotely bordering upon it, Scripture could not, as far as I can see, possibly be defended against the charge of encouraging wickedness and teaching men to "continue in sin that grace might abound." But, as matters stand, what is the very most that can fairly be deduced from David's case? That when a man does fall into a grievous sin, (1) If he live to have an opportunity of repentance, and (2) If he make due use of that opportunity, God will pardon and receive him. Our own lives are like works coming out in numbers; "serials," as they are called. The lives in Scripture are like the lives as we see them when we have read the last number. They are more than this; they are in many cases—what we never have either in history or in fiction—the whole with the Divine verdict stamped upon them. The end of a character whom we follow with excited interest through a serial is always, of course, doubtful—doubtful to us, and often, as we learn from their biographies, doubtful to the authors themselves. What will become of a character in a serial is always more or less uncertain until the end. At the end it is settled according to man's view. In Scripture it is, in some cases, settled according to God's view. We ought not in fairness, I think, to mix the "unfinished serial" view with the "finished serial" view. We must take our choice between the two. Acting in David's case upon this rule, which we would at once apply to any character in a novel, if we heard him spoken about, you will see that we must not use all our knowledge of what in a given case occurred afterwards, in order to decide upon one particular passage in his life. You ought not to wish your judgment to be biassed. In the case of a fictitious character in whom you were interested you would say to one who had read the whole book, "Don't tell me the end; let me form my own opinion." Act towards David precisely as you would towards a character in a serial, and I shall have no doubt as to your escaping much perplexity and arriving at a just decision upon the whole subject. God, if I may say so without irreverence, has formally and terribly released Himself from all liability in this matter. But this is not all. The sincere repentance of David is distinctly recorded. Read the number of the current month, and think of the monarch fasting, lying upon the earth all night, impervious to all solicitations from the elders of his house to rise from the ground, and tell me what do you think now? Have you changed the opinion which you had formed when you read last month's number? You have changed it, and you were right to change it. Why? Because the man has changed. If you take David's sin, judge of it by the law of sin; if you take his repentance, you must judge of it by the law of repentance. Decide as you please upon a character at a fixed point, but do not use all your knowledge of what comes afterwards to help you in forming your opinion at that point. If you will honestly do this on the "serial" principle I believe that David and what the inspired prophet said about him will cease to be a stumbling-block. We must have the closing number of the unfinished serial before we can venture to speak. We have the developed

character now; it is the character of the penitent. Now we can take the life as a whole, and what is it? It is a picture of what God's dealing sometimes is, in giving to the sinner opportunity to repent and "come to himself," and of what God's dealing always is to the sinner who avails himself of that opportunity and "seeks the Lord while He may be found." If this be not so, then the parable of the prodigal son, instead of being lovely, touching, and full of comfort, becomes absolutely without purpose and, indeed, without meaning. But, if it be so, then we are in a position to answer the question to which I said at the outset I meant to address myself, namely, "Can God ever express His approval of the whole character of a man who has committed the blackest sins which history records or the imagination can picture?" I have to lead up to the conclusion that He can. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) *David—Beloved*:—In what respects did David deserve this name? I. AS A TYPE OF CHRIST. 1. A perpetual covenant made with Him. Isa. lv. 3. (Explained Acts xiii. 34). 2. Born at Bethlehem. (John vii. 42; Acts xiii. 23). 3. Chosen out of the people. (Ps. lxxxix. 19). II. AS AN EXAMPLE TO US IN HIS OWN CHARACTER. 1. Two qualifications Godward. (1.) Transparent. (1 Samuel xvi. 7; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; xxix. 17; John i. 47-50). This is the Old Testament grace of "perfectness," compatible with much failure and sudden falls, but implying a heart sincere in purpose and true to God. Perhaps the best illustration is the mariner's compass, the needle of which, under all circumstances, turns towards the Pole. (2.) Unobtrusive. 1 Sam. xvi. 11; Judges vi. 13-16). 2. Five qualifications manward. (1 Sam. xvi. 18). (1) Cunning in playing=talents improved. (2) A mighty, valiant man=energies developed. (3) Prudent in matters=common-sense exercised. (4) A comely person=graces manifested. (5) The Lord is with him=Godliness displayed. This is how David struck a mere acquaintance. And yet he was the youngest, and occupied a lowly place in his own family. (Prov. xv. 33). III. HE WAS GOD'S CHOICE. If God calls us to witness for Him, and we feel ever so unfitted in ourselves, let us remember John xv. 16; 1 Cor. i. 27. (*R. E. Faulkner.*) *The character of David*:—Men are apt to give their chief attention to certain moral blemishes which disfigured the life of this extraordinary servant of God; and either they deduce from them an excuse for their own intemperances, or they assume that God does not hate sin so vehemently as Scripture elsewhere represents; or else they fairly own themselves unable to reconcile the several wicked acts of David's life with that election and special favour which God was pleased to bestow upon him. Now, the conclusion that the crimes of David can ever justify similar acts of wickedness in others must be utterly delusive, if we find that David never justified them in himself. I shall, therefore, endeavour to examine the character of this very eminent person, and to account, from a general view of the subject, for that title of affectionate preference—"a man after God's own heart"—by which the prophet was commissioned to speak of him. In reviewing, therefore, these facts, and comparing them with the privileges their author enjoyed, you may feel disposed to assume that God makes an irrespective choice of His servants, and that their moral worth does not weigh against His predetermined election. If such be the judgment you are disposed to give, from a consideration of David's career it is very certain that you have very imperfectly studied his character, and that you would strangely misinterpret the ways of our heavenly Father. For, without reckoning many extenuating circumstances in our consideration of David's evil deeds—for instance, his power and temptations as a king—his ignorance of that perfect morality which was unknown until the Gospel was preached—that disregard, too, of human life and female virtue which has always obtained in eastern countries—without, I say, reckoning any of these things in our final estimate of David's character, we may safely assert that neither in the Old or the New Testament can he found repentance so deep, humility so sincere, faith so unwavering, or generosity so noble, as the records of David's life show; and if these excellent virtues, united in the character of one person, are not sufficient to account for the Divine preference, then indeed David's privileges are a mystery, and God's love for him is wholly unintelligible. Let us, however, consider the several qualities which I have attributed to David, and, if possible, trace in them the workings of that Spirit who alone can rescue our nature from the dominion of evil. 1. First, his repentance. This we naturally look for after his fall with Bathsheba, and the attendant conspiracy against her husband's life. Immersed for a time in guilty indulgence, David seems to have been in that common state which sensuality produces, literally unaware of the extent of his

crime. Suddenly, and in the midst of this fancied security, the Prophet Nathan stood before him, and, by a parable almost unequalled for its truth and tenderness, recalled the king to his senses. Now, if any one of you wish to express his own repentance, or to test its reality, let him use such language as this, and try how far his feelings accord with it. If you can repent in this spirit, you know indeed what repentance is. In fact, the Bible affords no language for the broken and contrite heart equal to this, and other penitential Psalms by David. 2. Now, with regard to David's unwavering faith in God, I may say at once that it was the ruling principle of his life. Every thing he deliberately undertook was in simple reliance upon Divine support. Faith with David really was "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen:" it supported him through all the vicissitudes of a strangely chequered life, and spread a halo of hope around his departing spirit. After making allowance for the minute record of his human failings—a publicity which most men happily escape—and for the partial revelations which visited the times in which he lived, we find no character in Scripture so full, perhaps, of unwavering faith in the goodness and promises of God as David! 3. The last point which I shall notice in the character of this extraordinary person is his generous and noble feelings; and most strikingly were these displayed in David's connections both with Saul and his son Jonathan. The former regarded David as his deadliest enemy; the latter loved him as his bosom friend. In the study of the life of David the lesson which has struck me, and which I would inculcate upon you, is the extraordinary difference betwixt David and mankind in general, in all the good points for which he was eminent; for it would appear that, though we can imitate him in his crimes, in his faith and humility we widely differ from him: and thus we have a sort of prurient interest about all his weaknesses, fancying we see in them some justification for our own; whilst with his excellencies we are comparatively unacquainted, because they rebuke and cry shame to us at every step in life. Why David was the favourite of God rather than any of us, is, therefore, very clear: we partake the condemning sinfulness of his fallen nature; but we do not join him in penitence, in humility, and in faith. Our repentance is commonly mere shame and worldly discomfiture; no real change of mind, and therefore requiring to be repented of, our trust we give to the world and its trifles rather than to God. In business we are lively, earnest, and active; but in prayer we are cold and doubting. The records of David's piety are before us in the Psalms—compare with these the remembrance of your best devotional exercises, and you will see how we differ from him. If there be this difference betwixt you and David which I have attempted to show you, still delude not yourselves with the fancy that a higher standard of excellence was demanded from him than is expected from you. As to this matter there is but one rule—"Be ye perfect as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect," and for this every one of you must strive. The standard for all men is the highest possible. Finally, remember one other thing, which the example of David has taught us, with regard to progression upon the heavenly road: whatever be your peculiar temptations, or your besetting sins, you must commence a spiritual reformation—you must seek the renewing of your minds by prayer and spiritual exercises, or you will seek to grow better in vain. Our Lord enjoined the Pharisees to cleanse first the inside of the cup and the platter; and David, with the same conviction, prayed—"Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." This, believe me, is the only way to become a Christian here, or to inherit glory, immortality, and joy hereafter. (*A. Gatty, M.A.*) *Was David a character after God's Own heart—Yes or No?*—Was the character of David after God's own heart? Conventional pietists will to a man say, Yes. The most thoughtful, independent, and critical students of God's Book will to a man say, No. We say, No, for the following reasons:—I. Because the affirmative is a REFLECTION ON GOD'S HOLINESS. Sin is the "abominable thing" which the Almighty hates, hates everywhere, and in every form. David had his virtues, as most bad men have; but few men in history were guilty of more heinous crimes. He was guilty of falsehood, cruelties, adulteries, murders. His whole nature at times seemed flooded and fired with the spirit of revenge. It is blasphemy to assert that such a character was after the heart of infinite purity. We say, No, II. Because the affirmative is UNSUSTAINED BY THE WORD OF GOD. The text which is the passage quoted in its favour does not mean it. The expression, "after His own heart," does not mean after His own approval, but after His own counsel. "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Indeed, when these

words were uttered David was not born. The Almighty used David as He used Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, etc., after His own "heart," that is, after the counsel of His own will. We say, No, III. Because the affirmative is **FRAUGHT WITH MISCHIEF**. The thoughtful worldling says, "All right; if God approves of a man whose history is so full of meanness, revenge deception, ungovernable lust, and bloodshed, we cannot be far wrong." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 17. The spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies.—*The spoilers*:—Saul is reproved for his haste, his presumption, and his disobedience. Samuel then departs to Gibeah, and the nation are for a time, notwithstanding Saul's valour, reduced to great straits under the rule of the Philistines. "The spoilers," too, "came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies," spreading desolation over the whole country. At last, by the brilliant valour of Jonathan and his armour-bearer, a portion of the Philistine host was slain, and a sudden panic spreading throughout their camp, their entire forces were routed. Thus the children of Israel regained once more their freedom. **I. THAT IT IS WHEN MEN ARE UNPREPARED THAT TEMPTATIONS COME.** When "there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people," that was the time that the spoilers came out. Temptations assail us on our weakest side, and at the most unexpected moment. The sin that most easily besets us is the sin that comes upon us when we are in idleness and ease, in no way prepared for a spiritual conflict. **II. THAT TEMPTATIONS, THOUGH VERY DISTINCT, ARE OFTEN DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE FROM EACH OTHER, AND TO INDIVIDUALISE.** These spoilers came out of the camp in three companies, and they are not named nor individualised. Sins glide so into each other that it is frequently difficult to analyse any particular offence amidst so confused a mass. Lavish benefactions, for instance, may be given from thoughtless generosity, from true charity, or from ostentation. Who can tell which of these is the actuating motive in any particular case? Not even, often, the doer himself. It is the same with our sins and vices. It is difficult to assign the true place, and therefore the real guilt, of any particular one amongst them. **III. THAT TEMPTATIONS COME FROM THREE MAIN CAUSES, THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL.** The spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. "The world is too much with us;" its pleasures and its pains continually affect us. The lusts of the flesh unceasingly tend to drag us down. The temptations of Satan, too, are craftily devised to overwhelm us. **IV. THAT THESE TEMPTATIONS OFTEN ARISE FROM OUR SUPERABUNDANCE OF WORLDLY RICHES.** These spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines, and this camp was situated at Michmash, which name means treasure. Money is useful if it be usefully employed. Wealth is a great trust, which, if a man employs rightly, he may be a benefactor to his fellow-men, and may receive a blessing from God. But it is a great snare, more especially if it has been acquired without much personal merit or much personal exertion on the part of its possessor. **V. THAT THESE TEMPTATIONS HAVE THEIR STARTING POINT FREQUENTLY FROM WILFUL AND CONCEITED IGNORANCE.** The spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines. A modern author, Matthew Arnold, has taken the term Philistine as descriptive of self-satisfied and offensive want of culture. From the fields of ignorance and of thoughtlessness no harvest but a crop of tares can be expected. "Evil is wrought from want of thought as well as want of heart." **VI. THAT OBEDIENCE IS THE GARRISON THAT KEEPS THESE COMPANIES OF EVIL PASSIONS IN CHECK.** The spoilers did not come out of the camp of the Philistines to spread like devouring grasshoppers over the land of the children of Israel until Saul had disobeyed the Divine command given to him through Samuel. So, as long as we follow the plain line of duty, and act in obedience to the strict letter as well as to the real spirit of the law of God, we shall be little liable to the assaults of sin. It is when we palter with truth, equivocate with conscience, enter into dalliance with some evil passion, that we are ensnared by temptation. In the "Pilgrim's Progress," as long as Christian kept on the highway, he was safe; it was only when he strayed into the byways of error that he fell into the power of Giant Despair, and was immured in the dungeons of Doubting Castle. (*R. Young, M.A.*)

Vers. 19—21. Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel.—*The blacksmith's captivity*:—What a scalding subjugation for the Israelites! The Philistines had carried off all the blacksmiths, and torn down all

the blacksmith's shops, and abolished the blacksmith's trade in the land of Israel. The farmers and the mechanics having nothing to whet up the coulter, and the goad, and the pick-axe, save a simple file, industry was hindered, and work practically disgraced. The great idea of these Philistines was to keep the Israelites disarmed. I. I learn first from this subject, **HOW DANGEROUS IT IS FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD TO ALLOW ITS WEAPONS TO STAY IN THE HANDS OF ITS ENEMIES.** We are too willing to give up our weapons to the enemy. The world boasts that it has gobbled up the schools, and the colleges, and the arts, and the sciences, and the literature, and the printing-press. Infidelity is making a mighty attempt to get all our weapons in its hand, and then to keep them. You know it is making this boast all the time; and after a while, when the great battle between sin and righteousness has opened, if we do not look out we will be as badly off as these Israelites, without any swords to fight with, and without any sharpening instruments. I call upon the superintendents of literary institutions to see to it that the men who go into the class rooms to stand beside the Leyden jars and the electric batteries, and the microscopes and telescopes, be children of God not Philistines. We want to capture all the philosophical apparatus, and swing around the telescopes on the swivel, until through them we can see the morning star of the Redeemer, and with mineralogical hammer discover the "Rock of Ages," and amid the flora of all realms find the "Rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley." Recapture these weapons. Let men of God go out and take possession of the platform. Let the debauched printing-press of this country be recaptured for Christ, and the reporters, and the type-setters, and the editors, and publishers be made to swear allegiance to the Lord God of Truth. II. Again, I learn from this subject **WHAT A LARGE AMOUNT OF THE CHURCH'S RESOURCES IS ACTUALLY HIDDEN, AND BURIED, AND UNDEVELOPED.** The Bible intimates that that was a very rich land—this land of Israel. It says: "The stones are iron, and out of the hills thou shalt dig brass," and yet hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of this metal was kept under the hills. Well, that is the difficulty with the Church of God at this day. Its talent is not developed. The vast majority of Christians in this day are useless. The most of the Lord's battalion belong to the reserve corps. The most of the crew are asleep in the hammocks. The most of the metal is under the hills. O, is it not time for the Church of God to rouse up and understand that we want all the energies, all the talent, and all the wealth enlisted for Christ's sake? I like the nickname that the English soldiers gave to Blucher, the Commander. They called him "Old Forwards." We have had enough retreats in the Church of Christ; let us have a glorious advance. And I say to you to-night, as the General said when his troops were affrighted. Rising up in his stirrups, his hair flying in the wind, he lifted up his voice until 20,000 troops heard him, crying out: "Forward, the whole line!" III. Again: I learn from this subject, **THAT WE SOMETIMES DO WELL TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE WORLD'S SHARPENING INSTRUMENTS.** Let us go over among sharp business men, and among sharp literary men, and find out what their tact is, and then transfer it to the cause of Christ. If they have science and art it will do us good to rub against it. In other words, let us employ the world's grindstones. We will listen to their music, and we will watch their acumen, and we will use their grindstones; and we will borrow their philosophical apparatus to make our experiments, and we will borrow their printing-presses to publish our Bibles, and we will borrow their rail-trains to carry our Christian literature, and we will borrow their ships to transport our missionaries. That was what made Paul such a master in his day. He not only got all the learning he could get of Doctor Gamaliel, but afterward, standing on Mars Hill, and in crowded thoroughfare, quoted their poetry, and grasped their logic, and wielded their eloquence, and employed their mythology, until Dionysius the Areopagite, learned in the schools of Athens and Heliopolis, went down under his tremendous powers. That was what gave Thomas Chalmers his power in his day. He conquered the world's astronomy and compelled it to ring out the wisdom and greatness of the Lord, until for the second time, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. IV. Again, my subject teaches us **ON WHAT A SMALL ALLOWANCE PHILISTINE INIQUITY PUTS A MAN.** Yes; these Philistines shut up the mines, and then they took the spears and the swords, then they took the blacksmiths, then they took the grindstones, and they took everything but a file. O, that is the way sin works; it grabs everything. It begins with robbery, and it ends with robbery. It despoils this faculty and that faculty, and

keeps on until the whole nature is gone. Was the man eloquent before, it generally thickens his tongue. Was he fine in personal appearance, it mars his visage. Was he affluent, it sends the sheriff to sell him out. Was he influential, it destroys his popularity. Was he placid, and genial, and loving, it makes him splenetic and cross; and so utterly is he changed that you can see he is sarcastic and rasping, and that the Philistines have left him nothing but a file. So it was with Voltaire, the most applauded man of his day. Seized with hæmorrhage of the lungs in Paris, where he had gone to be crowned in the theatre as the idol of all France, he sends a messenger to get a priest, that he may be reconciled to the Church before he dies. A great terror falls upon him. He makes the place all round about him so dismal that the nurse declares that she would not for all the wealth of Europe see another infidel die. Philistine iniquity had promised him all the world's garlands, but in the last hour of his life, when he needed solacing, sent tearing across his conscience and his nerves a file, a file. So it was with Lord Byron. Is it not so, Herod? Is it not so, Hildebrand? Is it not so, Robespierre? Aye! aye! it is so; it is so. "The way of the wicked He turneth upside down." History tells us that when Rome was founded, on that day there were twelve vultures flying through the air; but when a transgressor dies, the sky is black with whole flocks of them. When I see sin robbing so many of my hearers, and I see them going down day by day, and week by week, I must give a plain warning. V. I learn from this subject **WHAT A SAD THING IT IS WHEN THE CHURCH OF GOD LOSES ITS METAL**. These Philistines saw that if they could only get all the metallic weapons out of the hands of the Israelites all would be well, and, therefore, they took the swords and the spears. They did not want them to have a single metallic weapon. When the metal of the Israelites was gone their strength was gone. This is the trouble with the Church of God to-day. It is surrendering its courage. It has not got enough metal. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Philistinian policy*:—The care here taken by the Philistines to leave no smith in Israel, who should make any arms for their defence, is an usual policy with conquerors, in order to disarm and keep in subjection those whom they have subdued. Our spiritual enemy, represented by these Philistines, never failed to use the like stratagem. The souls which they hold in captivity they first deprive of their arms, and prevent, as much as possible, the use of any weapons which may rescue them from their tyranny and regain their liberty. These arms are principally the word of God, and the use of the Holy Scriptures, which are not only a light and lantern to our path, but a buckler of defence, and a sword to smite and subdue our enemies. Thus the spirits of error and lies employ their utmost efforts and craft to take away both the knowledge and means of truth.

CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 1—23. **Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison.**—*Jonathan's exploit at Michmash*:—It is evident that Saul had no thought at this time of making an attack on the Philistines. How could he, with soldiers so poorly armed and so little to encourage them? Samuel does not appear to have been with him. But in his company was a priest, Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, grandson of Eli, perhaps the same as Ahimelech, afterwards introduced. Saul still adhered to the forms of religion; but he had too much resemblance to the Church of Sardis—"Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." The position of the army of Israel with reference to the Philistines seems to have been very similar to what it was afterwards when Goliath defied the army of the living God. The Israelites could only look on, in helpless inactivity. But just as the youthful spirit of David was afterwards roused in these circumstances to exertion, so on the present occasion was the youthful spirit of Jonathan. It was not the first time that he had attacked the garrison of the Philistines. (Chap. xiii. 3.) But what he did on the former occasion seems to have been under more equal conditions than the seemingly desperate enterprise to which he betook himself now. A project of unprecedented daring came into his mind. He took counsel with no one about it. A single confidant and companion was all that he

thought of—his armour-bearer, or aide-de-camp. And even him he did not so much consult as attach. "Come," said he, "and let us go over into the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint by the Lord to save by many or by few." No words are needed to show the daring character of this project. The one point of view in which there was the faintest possibility of success was that the Lord God might favour the enterprise. The God of their fathers might work for them, and if He did so there was no restraint with Him to work by many or by few. Had He not worked by Ehud alone to deliver their fathers from the Moabites? Had he not worked by Shamgar alone, when with his ox goad he slew six hundred Philistines? Had he not worked by Samson alone in all his wonderful exploits? Might he not work that day by Jonathan and his armour-bearer, and, after all, only produce a new chapter in that history which had already shown so many wonderful interpositions? Jonathan's mind was possessed by the idea. After all, if he failed, he could but lose his life. It is in this working of faith that must be regarded as the most characteristic feature of the attempt of Jonathan. He showed himself one of the noble heroes of faith, not unworthy to be enrolled in the glorious record of the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews. What encouragement is here for every Christian worker! Don't despond when you seem to fail in your first and most direct endeavour. But Jonathan's faith in God was called to manifest itself in a way very different from that in which the faith of most young persons has to be exercised now. Faith led Jonathan to seize sword and spear, and hurry out to an enterprise in which he could only succeed by risking his own life and destroying the lives of others. We are thus brought face to face with a strange but fascinating development of the religious spirit—military faith. The subject has received a new and wonderful illustration in our day in the character and career of that great Christian hero, General Gordon. No one imagines that without his faith Gordon would have been what he was or could have done what he did. It gave him a conviction that he was an instrument in God's hands, and that when he was moved to undertake anything as being God's will, he would be carried through all difficulties, enabled to surmount all opposition, and to carry the point in face of the most tremendous odds. And to a great extent the result verified the belief. One is almost disposed to envy Jonathan, with his whole powers of mind and body knit up to the pitch of firmest and most dauntless resolution, under the inspiration that moved him to this apparently desperate enterprise. All the world would have rushed to stop him, insanely throwing away his life, without the faintest chance of escape. But a voice spoke firmly in his bosom—I am not throwing away my life. And Jonathan did not want certain tokens of encouragement. It was something that his armour-bearer neither flinched nor remonstrated. Whether in the way of friendly banter or otherwise, the garrison, on perceiving them, invited them to come up, and they would "show them a thing." Greatly encouraged by the sign, they clambered up on hands and feet till they gained the top of the rock. Then, when nothing of the kind was expected, they fell on the garrison and began to kill. So sudden and unexpected an onslaught threw the garrison into a panic. And thus the faith of Jonathan had a glorious reward. The inspiration of faith vindicated itself, and the noble self-devotion that had plunged into this otherwise desperate enterprise, because there was no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few, led thus to a triumph more speedy and more complete than even Jonathan could have ventured to dream of.

1. This incident is full of lessons for modern times. First, it shows what wide and important results may come from individual conviction. Did not the Reformation begin through the steadfastness of Luther, the miner's son of Eisleben, to the voice that spoke out so loudly to himself? Did not Carey lay the foundation of the modern mission in India, because he could not get rid of that verse of Scripture, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature?" Did not Livingstone persevere in the most dangerous, the most desperate enterprise of our time, because he could not quench the voice that called him to open up Africa or perish? Learn, every one, from this, never to be faithless to any conviction given to you, though, as far as you know, it is given to you alone.

2. This narrative shows what large results may flow from individual effort. Think how many children have been rescued by Dr. Barnardo, how many have been emigrated by Miss Macpherson, how many souls have been impressed by Mr. Moody, how many orphans have been cared for by Mr. Müller, how many stricken ones have been relieved in the institutions of John Bost.

8. Lastly, we

may learn from this narrative that the true secret of all spiritual success lies in our seeking to be instruments in God's hands, and in our lending ourselves to Him, to do in us and by us whatever is good in His sight. It was not Jonathan's project that was to be carried out; it was the Lord's cause that was to be advanced. Jonathan had no personal ends in this matter. He was willing to give up his life, if the Lord should require it. It is a like consecration in all spiritual service that brings most blessing and success. "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *The battle of Michmash*:—These were evil days for the people of Israel. But it was in these dark days that Jonathan shone so famous. It is yet true that difficulties prove our mettle, and that the greater the hardship or peril, the more is the victory worth telling. I. **THE PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY SHOULD ROUSE OUR COURAGE.** Is there not need for more chivalry among the soldiers of Christ? How sin lords it over us, even in England. Intemperance, lust, cruelty, ignorance, are the enemies of our land; and they do almost as they like; they are slaying our people, starving our children, dishonouring our women. Think, for instance, of the history of one gin-palace. Where are our Jonathans? If we could not tolerate the presence of an invading foe how can we bear to see the arrogance and cruelty of the enemies of Jesus Christ in this so-called Christian land? It was Jonathan who conceived the plan of attacking the Philistines; which leads us to say—princes should set the example. Officers, to the front. Have you wealth?—use it as becomes a prince of God. Have you learning?—use it to slay ignorance. How the example of Lord Shaftesbury has animated weaker men, and made them feel like the armour-bearer of Jonathan. II. It is true that **EARNEST LEADERS SHOULD NOT LACK BRAVE FOLLOWERS.** We are not told the name of the young man who was Jonathan's armour-bearer, but he was worthy of the situation. Listen to him: "Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart." As if he had said, "Look at me; do I look like flinching? If thou art first, I will be second! I am ready to follow thy lead: thou canst not go where I will not be close behind." If Jesus Christ could only have a Church like that armour-bearer, how soon the victory would be ours! And it is yet true that the best of leaders is all the better for the knowledge that his followers will not fail him. Let those of us whose place is not to lead, yet help our commander by acting, so that whenever he looks at us he will see our faces say, "I am with thee according to thy heart." III. Jonathan knew that **GOD CAN WIN BY A MINORITY.** He said to his companion, "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." He remembered that God had promised, "One shall chase a thousand, two put ten thousand to flight." If, in fighting the Lord's battles, we wait till we outnumber the foe, we shall never "do exploits." Joshua and Caleb were outvoted, but they said, "Let us go up at once and possess it." The twelve apostles did not wait, but, in the teeth of the Sanhedrim, preached "Jesus and the resurrection." At one time John Wesley was almost the only clergyman who dared the rotten eggs of the Philistines of his day, and now he and his brother have a monument in Westminster Abbey! IV. **AT THE BATTLE OF MICHMASH, WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THAT GOD HELPS THEM WHO HELP THEMSELVES.** God worked with the brave men who had gone alone. This "trembling of God," as it is called in the margin, struck a panic into the hearts of the Philistines. This might have happened if Jonathan had not gone up, but most likely not. God works yet by means, and delights in co-operating with His people. If you want God to help you, help yourself. Climb up the hill in spite of Philistinic sneers, and when you are at the top, the earth shall quake. You will not be alone very long. Saul brought his army after the brave pair had gone alone, and the number of Saul's people increased directly, as you read in verses 21, 22. The enslaved Hebrews rose against their masters, and these also who had hid themselves. "So the Lord saved Israel that day." (*Thomas Champness.*) *The valiant soldier*:—While the Philistines are making inroads upon Israel—sending out their different companies—and strengthening themselves in garrisons or strongholds—poor Saul remains, with his six hundred men, fearful and dispirited, under a pomegranate tree; a standing proof of what God had told Israel should befall them when they sinned against Him—their enemies the head, and they the tail. But God never will leave Himself without a little faithful remnant, be it ever so small, so despised, or so invisible. Haven't you sometimes seen a tree of which the fruit has been gathered, with just two or three left on in some part that has been overlooked, or in the very uppermost bough, where they

could not well be reached? Now, God compares the very few of His people, whom He reserves, to this: "Two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof." (Isaiah xvii. 8). When we look at this we need to ask, with intense earnestness, "Lord, make me one of those few." Jonathan, bold as a lion, strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, says to his armour-bearer, "Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father." No, he had learned not to confer with flesh and blood, when flesh and blood made him a coward in the cause of his God. When you see plainly what is your duty, however difficult, go forward. There will be many evil counsellors, who can talk much of the trials and difficulties, and make other hearts faint like their own: but, you recollect, the Lord does not like such soldiers; He would not let them stay in His army, for He well knew how catching fear is, and what sad work it makes in the camp of Israel. There is a Counsellor from whose lips you may ever hear, "Fear not." "Incline your ear, and come unto Him." We see the children of this world urging each other forward—overcoming endless difficulties—and accomplishing immense designs—while, too often, if God's children have any great work which they would fain do for Him, a thousand difficulties, and ten thousand fears are started, and while they are debating the enemy is gaining ground. Oh, for one such view of our precious Master as Jonathan had! Did we thus see Him all difficulties would vanish. (*Helen Plumptre.*) *Room for services in the church*:—In the fourteenth chapter we see on the part of Jonathan what may be described as a disorderly courage. Disorderly courage has often been crowned with successes, and has therefore presented a strong temptation to ill-controlled natures. Free lances have unquestionably done good service in many a man, physical and moral. At the same time there ought to be a great central authority in all well-conducted operations. Room should always be left for genius, and for those sudden impulses of the soul which it is sometimes impossible to distinguish from inspiration: but taking the rank and file, and looking upon the Church as a whole, it will be found that a quiet exercise of discipline and a steady pursuit of paths of order will answer best in the great issue. In the Church, let us repeat, room should be found for all sorts of men: for the great king and the young soldier, for the flashing genius and the slow-moving mind. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. There was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side.—*Rocks on both sides*:—The cruel army of the Philistines must be taken and scattered. There is just one man, accompanied by his bodyguard, to do that thing. Jonathan is the hero of the scene. These two men, Jonathan and his bodyguard, drive back and drive down the Philistines over the rocks, and open a campaign which demolishes the enemies of Israel. I suppose that the overhanging and overshadowing rocks on either side did not baulk or dishearten Jonathan or his bodyguard, but only roused and filled them with enthusiasm as they went up. "There was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side." You have been, or are now, some of you, in this crisis of the text. If a man meets one trouble, he can go through with it. He gathers all his energies, concentrates them upon one point, and in the strength of God, or by his own natural determination, goes through it. But the man who has trouble to the right of him, and trouble to the left of him is to be pitied. Did either trouble come alone, he might endure it, but two troubles, two disasters, two overshadowing misfortunes, are Bozez and Seneh. God pity him! "There is a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side." I. IN THIS CRISIS OF THE TEXT IS THAT MAN WHOSE FORTUNE AND HEALTH FAIL AT THE SAME TIME. Nine-tenths of all our merchants capsize in business before they come to forty-five years of age. There is some collision in commercial circles, and they stop payment. When the calamity does come, it is awful. The man goes home in despair, and he tells his family: "We'll have to go to the poor-house." He takes a dolorous view of everything. It seems as if he never could rise. But a little time passes, and he says: "Why, I am not so badly off after all; I have my family left." Before the Lord turned Adam out of Paradise he gave him Eve, so that when he lost Paradise he could stand it. Well, this man of whom I am speaking looks around, and he finds his family is left, and he rallies, and the light comes to his eyes, and the smile to his face, and the courage to his heart. In two years he is quite over it. He makes his financial calamity the first chapter in a new era of prosperity. He met that one trouble—conquered it. He sat down for a little while under the

grim shadow of the rock Bozez; yet he soon rose, and began, like Jonathan, to climb. But how often it is that physical ailment comes with financial embarrassment. When the fortune failed it broke the man's spirit. His nerves were shattered. His brain was stunned.—I can show you hundreds of men in New York to-morrow whose fortune and health failed at the same time. Now, what is such a man to do? In the name of Almighty God, I will tell him what to do. Do as Jonathan did—climb; climb up into the sunlight of God's favour and consolation. I can go through the Churches, and show you men who lost fortune and health at the same time, and yet who sing all day and dream of heaven all night. II. AGAIN, THAT MAN IS IN THE CRISIS OF THE TEXT WHO HAS HOME TROUBLES AND OUTSIDE PERSECUTION AT THE SAME TIME. The world treats a man well just as long as it pays best to treat him well. As long as it can manufacture success out of his bone, and brain, and muscle, it favours him. The world fattens the horse it wants to drive. But let a man see it his duty to cross the track of the world, then every bush is full of horns and tusks thrust at him. They will belittle him. They will caricature him. They will call his generosity self-aggrandisement, and his piety sanctimoniousness. The very worst persecution will some time come upon him from those who profess to be Christians. Now a certain amount of persecution rouses a man's defiance, stirs his blood for magnificent battle, and makes him fifty times more a man than he would have been without the persecution. So it was with Millard, the preacher, in the time of Louis XI. When Louis XI sent word to him that unless he stopped preaching in that style he would throw him into the river, he replied: "Tell the king that I will reach heaven sooner by water than he will reach it by fast horses." A certain amount of persecution is a tonic and an inspiration, but too much of it, and too long continued, becomes the rock Bozez, throwing a dark shadow over a man's life. What is he to do then? Go home, you say. Good advice, that. That is just the place for a man to go when the world abuses him. Go home. Blessed be God for our quiet and sympathetic homes. But there is many a man who has the reputation of having a home when he has none. Sometimes men have awakened to find on one side of them the rock of persecution, and on the other side the rock of domestic infelicity. What shall such an one do? Do as Jonathan did—climb. Get up into the heights of God's consolation, from which he may look down in triumph upon outside persecution and home trouble. III. AGAIN, THAT WOMAN STANDS IN THE CRISIS OF THE TEXT, WHO HAS BEREAVEMENT AND A STRUGGLE FOR A LIVELIHOOD AT THE SAME TIME. How many women there are seated between the rock of bereavement on the one side, and the rock of destitution on the other, Bozez and Seneh interlocking their shadow and dropping them upon her miserable way. "There is a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side." What are such to do? Somehow, let them climb up into the heights of the glorious promise: "Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in Me." Or get up into the heights of that other glorious promise: "The Lord preserveth the stranger and relieveth the widow and the fatherless." IV. THAT MAN IS IN THE CRISIS OF THE TEXT WHO HAS A WASTED LIFE ON THE ONE SIDE AND AN UNILLUMINATED ETERNITY ON THE OTHER. Though a man may all his life have cultured deliberation and self-poise, if he gets into that position, all his self-possession is gone. There are all the wrong thoughts of his existence, all the wrong deeds, all the wrong words—strata above strata, granitic, ponderous, overshadowing. That rock I call Bozez. On the other side are all the retributions of the future, the thrones of judgment, the eternal ages, angry with his long defiance. That rock I call Seneh. Between these two rocks ten thousand times ten thousand have perished. O man immortal, man redeemed, man blood-bought, climb up out of those shadows! Climb up by the way of the Cross. To become a Christian is not to go meanly down; it is to come gloriously up—up into the communion of saints; up into the peace that passeth all understanding; up into the companionship of angels. He lives upward; he dies upward. (*T. De Witt Talmage*.) *Difficult extremes*:—There are critical periods in the life of man, where decision is of the utmost importance. Life and honour, or disgrace and death, are dependent on the course to be taken at such periods. If difficulties multiply, the greater decision is required. This was precisely the case with Jonathan. The approach to the garrison would have been pronounced impassable by a less decisive and less courageous mind. But nothing is too hard to accomplish, with the help of God on your side and a decided perseverance. I. The difficult extremes of the present crisis are a SCEPTICAL SPIRIT ON ONE HAND AND A

SUPERSTITIOUS SPIRIT ON THE OTHER. Infidelity and superstition are like two rocks. 1. The mind commencing an independent train of thinking, and directing its thoughts to the inquiry, "What is truth?" is met by the avowed infidel, who begins by a subtle augmentation to burden and perplex the soul. 2. On the other hand, superstition claims from the inquirer after truth implicit confidence in its priests and reliance on its ceremonies. II. The second class of difficult extremes may be seen in **THE URGENT CLAIMS ON BUSINESS, AND THE TEMPTATIONS OF LEISURE.** 1. The competition in business. The large portion of time and mental energy consumed in providing for "the bread that perisheth," leaves but fragments of time and mental power for the interests of the immortal soul—the less has the first claim, the greater has the second. But when the first has been answered there is little but exhaustion left. 2. The temptations of leisure are usually in the same proportion as the demands of business are exhausting. Mind and body endeavour to recruit expended energy. Then the allurements to pleasure becomes powerful. III. The third class of difficult extremes may be seen in **THE DANGER OF PRESUMPTION ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE EQUAL DANGER OF DESPONDENCY ON THE OTHER.** 1. Presumption sometimes so infatuates the mind as to subdue it with an entire indifference to the realities of eternity. 2. Despondency. The remedy must be prompt and decided faith. An acquaintance with the Word of God. Courageous decision in complying with its requirements. There are no rocks before the cross, though there may be one on either side. (*Preacher's Assistant.*)

Ver. 6. There is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many or by few.—Jonathan's faith:—1. This faith of Jonathan was reasonable. Some think faith mere assumption, or the result of ignorance. It is not so. Faith rests on reason. We know we can do nothing of ourselves in an emergency like that which had overtaken the children of Israel. We know God has infinite power, and He has said that He will help those who trust Him. He has the power and He is willing, then is it not in reason to trust Him? 2. Jonathan believed that it was the height of wisdom to give God the opportunity to reveal His mighty arm. God needs our faith. God is necessary to us, and we, in a sense, are necessary to God. We need God that we may have ground for our faith, and He needs our faith to call out His help. We trust too much in ourselves. Said one to me, "the churches are growing so weak." I would to God that they were weak enough to lean on God. I do not doubt that there are church members who can get up at five o'clock, swing in and out with the multitude at Moody and Sankey's meetings, but how few are willing to go up alone against the Philistines. There is an inspiration in a multitude, but it is not always the inspiration that comes through faith in God. The Philistines commenced slaying each other. So it often is when God comes down to help the Church, sinners assist the work in their confusion. Then the Israelites who had hid in caves, when they saw that the army of the Philistines had met disaster, helped on the victory. When God manifests His power, backsliders return. Every man can do something in the Church's work. 3. Remember, lastly, that if such faith and such labour glorified God, then they can do it again. Is the Church in straitened circumstances? Are the enemies clamorous? There is need of the faith of Jonathan and of his armour-bearer. Give God an opportunity, by trusting in Him, to reveal His strength. Defeat comes through a lack of faith. Let no one's heart be faint. (*Metropolitan Pulpit.*) **God and we:**—Richter says that we should all "make as much of ourselves as can be made out of the stuff." The stuff we are made of may be particularly poor, for we know that we have been able to make little or nothing out of it. Suppose we take it to its Maker and ask Him to do something with it? On the keystone of a bridge over a stream in a beautiful Scotch parish are the words, "God and We," teaching all who read them that nothing can be built without the help of the great Architect. It is so with the edification or building up of ourselves. It is not "God alone, which would mean human idleness; or "We" alone, which would mean human presumption; or "We and God," which would be almost blasphemy; but "God and We." **Divine and human co-operation:**—We may often be cheered by this recollection of a beautiful reciprocity in things human and Divine. If God promises His unfailing help to us He has also conditioned much of the success of His cause on our help rendered to it. Sun, moon, and stars are mutual helpers in sustaining the equilibrium of Nature's forces. When the earth, sun, and moon join their attractions in a right line the tides rise to the full; but when these worlds exert

their forces at right angles then the tides sink to their lowest. So when we place ourselves in the right attitude of harmony with the Divine powers, then we exert the most beneficent influence. The Divine Spirit is the great and all-sufficient source of help for human souls. Science gives us a beautiful illustration. A strong man cannot very long hold up a heavy weight. His arm grows weary and he feels weak. But if a current from a magnetic battery or an electric machine be applied to the tired arm the muscles instantly regain strength, and the weight is held up with ease. So it is with the invisible current of the Divine power of the Spirit applied to our weary souls. (*Christian Commonwealth.*) *Strength in quiet assurance*:—Pelopidas, when informed that the number of the enemy was double that of his own army, replied: "So much the better. We shall conquer so many the more." His intelligent self-possession was more than a thousand spears. The battle of Gilboa was lost before Saul began it. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (*E. P. Thwing.*)

Ver. 7. **I am with thee.**—*The armour-bearer who backed Jonathan*:—Jonathan was a brave and generous leader of men. In the picture we are to study we see Jonathan, tired of inaction, and longing to be against the enemy, suddenly determine to do a little skirmishing on his own account; and yet there was a profoundly religious spirit controlling the impulse which led him to make the attempt. Jonathan devoutly believed that God was able to work by the few as well as by the many. He made known his purpose to his armour-bearer and no doubt awaited with interest the attitude which that young man would take in the matter. Then the armour-bearer replied with a warm-hearted enthusiasm and fidelity that must have made Jonathan's generous blood tingle, "Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart." Who could not win victories backed by such armour-bearers as that? Go back through history and you will see that the men who have done the greatest work in the world are the men who have been backed by faithful helpers with staunch and loyal hearts. Moses was chosen to lead Israel out of Egypt, but God gave him Miriam and Aaron for armour-bearers. Joshua became the great soldier and leader of his nation, but what a splendid armour-bearer he had in Caleb. Daniel stands out gloriously against the dark background of wicked Babylon, but the three brave Hebrew boys that went into the fiery furnace rather than betray their faith in God were worthy armour-bearers to such a leader. Paul shines forth from Ephesus, and Rome, and Athens, and Corinth as the great leader and evangelist, but who can ever tell how much Silas, and Barnabas, and Timothy meant to the great apostle as armour-bearers to encourage and sustain him? Of course God works through leaders. I do not wish for one moment to shirk my own responsibility or my own duty with reference to a revival. But feeling in this way, I also feel just as certainly that I cannot win in this church and in this city many souls to Christ, unless the men and women of this church shall be loyal and faithful armour-bearers. There are many ways in which the individual members of a church may be helpful armour-bearers to the pastor in a time like this. 1. The first is in their attitude to God and to their fellow Christians in relation to the meetings. Sincere and earnest prayer which takes possession of the heart and life must help to sustain the pastor in leading a campaign for the saving of souls. Do you think that Peter could have won that victory on the day of Pentecost if the hundred and twenty had been going about criticising him; or had been making outside engagements to take away their interest from the meeting. So both your attitude to God and your attitude toward your fellow church members are of the most serious importance. Revivals never come easily. A revival of religion is a campaign waged against the world, and the flesh, and the devil. Every liquor saloon in this country is dead set against a revival of religion. Not only are these against it, but the greed for money, and the love of ease and self-indulgence, in church members as well as in outsiders, are all against a revival of religion. Hence a real, genuine revival of religion always comes hard. 2. If you are to be a real armour-bearer you, too, must handle the sword of the Spirit; you must not wait for the pastor to hunt out individuals one by one and win them to Christ. You must be faithful in your own place and with self-denial and earnestness seek to win souls yourself. There are many souls who are waiting for but a touch of influence from the outside to turn the balances on the side of righteousness. And what joy it would bring to you if you were to thus feel

yourself a real armour-bearer in Christ's work. It seems terrible, when the human heart is capable of such marvellous things in the way of loyalty, and zeal, and enthusiasm, that we who profess the name of Jesus Christ, and have been redeemed by His precious blood, should be so lacking here. What glorious deeds have been done through the chivalric earnestness of human souls! (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. And they fell before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer slew after him.—*The qualities that win*:—Sir Charles Napier, when in India, encountered an army of thirty-five thousand Belooches with two thousand men, of whom only four hundred were Europeans. He charged them in the centre up a high bank, and for three hours the battle was undecided. At last they turned and fled. It is this sort of pluck, tenacity and determined perseverance which wins soldiers' battles, and, indeed, every battle. It is the one neck nearer that wins the race and shows the blood; the one pull more of the oar that proves the "beefiness" of the fellow, as Oxford men say; it is the one march more that wins the campaign, the five minutes more persistent courage that wins the fight. Though your force be less than another's, you equal and outmaster your opponent if you continue it longer and concentrate it more. (*S. Smiles.*)

Vers. 24—52. And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people.—*Great issues hang on a King's rash word*:—One little sentence, spoken in a moment of passion by King Henry the Second, brought a lifetime of remorse and penance and humiliation, and made him responsible for a murder which his calmer soul abhorred. He had been hearing of repetitions of troubles brought about by his great Chancellor, à Becket, and in a moment of exasperated temper exclaimed, "Of the cowards that eat my bread, is there none will rid me of this turbulent priest?" Too soon, and too eagerly, the hasty words were acted upon. The anger of the moment was responsible for a deed which the lifetime of remorse and humiliation could not undo. (*Footsteps of Truth.*) *Saul's wilfulness*:—That Saul was now suffering in character under the influence of the high position and great power to which he had been raised, is only too apparent from what is recorded in these verses. No doubt he pays more respect that he has been used to pay to the forms of religion. But how are we to explain his increase of religiousness side by side with the advance of moral obliquity and recklessness? Why should he be more careful in the service of God while he becomes more imperious in temper, more stubborn in will, and more regardless of the obligations alike of king and father? The explanation is not difficult to find. The expostulation of Samuel had given him a fright. The announcement that the kingdom would not be continued in his line, and that God had found a worthier man to set over His people Israel, had moved him to the quick. There could be no doubt that Samuel was speaking the truth. Saul had begun to disregard God's will in his public acts, and was now beginning to reap the penalty. He felt that he must pay more attention to God's will. If he was not to lose everything, he must try to be more religious. There is no sign of his feeling penitent in heart. He is not concerned in spirit for his unworthy behaviour toward God. He feels only that his own interests as king are imperilled. It is this selfish motive that makes him determine to be more religious. Alas, how common has this spirit been in the history of the world! Louis XIV. has led a most wicked and profligate life, and he has ever and anon qualms that threaten him with the wrath of God. To avert that wrath, he must be more attentive to his religious duties. He must show more favour to the Church, exalt her dignitaries to greater honour, endow her orders and foundations with greater wealth. But that is not all. He must use all the arms and resources of his kingdom for ridding the Church of her enemies. For twenty years he must harass the Protestants. What the magnificent monarch did on a large scale, millions of obscurer men have done on a small. It is a sad truth that terror and selfishness have been at the foundation of a great deal of that which passes current as religion. But it is all because what he calls religion is no religion; it is the selfish bargain-making spirit, which aims no higher than deliverance from pain; it is not the noble exercise of the soul, prostrated by the sense of guilt, and helpless through consciousness of weakness, lifting up its eyes to the hills whence cometh its help, and rejoicing in the grace that freely pardons all its sin through the blood of Christ, and in the gift.

of the Holy Spirit that renews and sanctifies the soul. The first thing that Saul does, in the exercise of this selfish spirit, is to impose on the people an obligation to fast until the day be over. Jonathan was a true man of God. He was in far nearer fellowship with God than his father, and yet so far from approving of the religious order to fast which his father had given, he regards it with displeasure and distrust. Godly men will sometimes be found less outwardly religious than some other men, and will greatly shock them by being so. God had given a wonderful deliverance that day through Jonathan. Jonathan was as remarkable for the power of faith as Saul for the want of it. At worst, it was but a ceremonial offence, but to Jonathan it was not even that. But Saul was too obstinate to admit the plea. By a new oath, he devoted his son to death. Nothing could show more clearly the deplorable state of his mind. In the eye of reason and of justice, Jonathau had committed no offence. He had given signal evidence of the possession in a remarkable degree of the favour of God. He had laid the nation under inconceivable obligations. All these pleas were for him; and surely in the king's breast a voice might have been heard pleading, Your son, your first-born, "the beginning of your strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power"! Is it possible that this voice was silenced by jealousy, jealousy of his own son, like his after-jealousy of David? What kind of heart could this Saul have had when in such circumstances he could deliberately say, "God do so, and more also, for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan"? But "the Divine right of kings to govern wrong" is not altogether without check. A temporary revolution saved Jonathan. It was one good effect of excitement. In calmer circumstances, the people might have been too terrified to interfere. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. Evidently the military spirit ruled in Saul, but it did not bring peace nor blessing to the kingdom. Once off the right rail, Saul never got on it again; rash and restless, he doubtless involved his people in many a disaster, fulfilling all that Samuel had said about taking from the people, fulfilling but little that the people had hoped concerning deliverance from the hand of the Philistines. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Acting from mere impulse*:—We have to propose the question, "What, in recording this passage, did the Holy Spirit mean that we should learn from it?" We shall not be long in perceiving that there is brought before us, chiefly, one more painful defect in Saul's general conduct, and that the consequences associated with that defect are very distinctly described: it is one, too, which is far from being uncommon. In codes of laws drawn up by man this defect is not indeed set down by name, and signalised as a sin, though humanity bleeds under its effects, but it is condemned, and justly so, by that "commandment" which is "exceeding broad." We refer to the habit of inconsiderateness—the habit of acting from mere impulse, of allowing merely momentary feeling to sway, without pausing to ask whither the act which we perform, or the step on which we decide, will lead us, and how it will affect other persons besides ourselves. It is truly a melancholy instance which this chapter describes. To pronounce a curse at all was presumptuous, where there was no direct command of God to be infringed; and more, what personal pain it inflicted—what actual disadvantages it involved—what further mischief it would have done, if the matter had been left in the King of Israel's hand! How different all would have been, if, instead of following the mere impulse of an excited mind, he had thought for a moment, and, when prompted to issue his decree, had paused to ask, How will this affect my people? how will it operate in the end? But where, in this imperfect world, can we turn our eyes without meeting scenes and circumstances which cause us, involuntarily, to say within ourselves, "What a difference there would have been here if there had been more of reflection and less of mere impulse." I. WE MAY GATHER A SUGGESTION OR TWO FROM THIS PART OF SAUL'S HISTORY, FOR OUR OWN CAUTION AND ADMONITION. 1. Let us remember that this inconsiderateness, this acting from mere impulse, is commonly the result of an overweening regard to self. It was not Saul who commenced this engagement, but he could not bear not to have the most prominent place in the affair, and he must do something to make himself both seen and felt—he must make his authority evident, though the result of his decree would inevitably be the misery of his people all that day. His love for his own dear self, and the manner in which all his thoughts centred around that favourite object, are discernible in the very words of the imprecation, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies." Let us make the interests of others the object of our regard

in all we undertake. Never let us think of ourselves without, at the same time, thinking of others too. The habit of attaching importance to others' convenience, to others' comforts, to others' feelings, will, under God, prove a great preservative against acting from mere impulse. 2. This habit, which we condemn, even though it may involve no serious consequences to others, is manifestly wrong, because it is decidedly atheistic. It affords no room for God; it makes no reference to Him. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him" is a command which needs no other basis than the simple fact that there is a God, and that we are His feeble and dependent creatures. Nehemiah was in the habit of associating God with everything, of putting Him in His proper place: Saul allowed Him perpetually to be out of sight. Hence the difference between the practice of the two men. The one acted deliberately, because he acted prayerfully; the other acted from impulse, because it was no part of his habit to recognise his dependence upon God. 3. Acting from impulse, while it often results in the infliction of mischief on others, is not less to be deprecated on account of the injury which hasty and intemperate men occasion to themselves, and chiefly in this respect—the bitter and enduring bondage into which their thoughtlessness often brings them. Think, then, before you act; pray, before you put your purpose into practice. Consider others as well as yourselves. Direct design to do wrong has slain its thousands; but the inconsiderateness of mere impulse has slain its tens of thousands. "None of us liveth to himself." II. THE NARRATIVE ALLOWS US TO DRAW SOME FEW GENERAL INFERENCES AS TO THE CHARACTER OF SAUL'S PERSONAL RELIGION AT THIS TIME. 1. It leads us to perceive how strangely partial his religion was in its operation. Saul's religion was not of a very deep character; it was of that order which allows its professor to be vastly more affected by the neglect of something outward and formal than by the indulgence, within himself, of a wrong and impious state of mind. It puts us in mind of that most thorough manifestation of hypocrisy, of which the New Testament contains the record, when the accusers and betrayers of Jesus shrunk back with sanctimonious step from the threshold of the judgment-hall and would not set foot within it, "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover." And yet, though their consciences would not allow them to do this, the very same consciences, when Pilate came out to them, and declared that Jesus was innocent, presented no obstacle to their murderous cry, "Crucify him:—not this man, but Barabbas." 2. Even in the discharge of properly religious duties Saul was tardy and dilatory; and when, at last, he was found doing that which was right, he appeared to act, quite as much as when he did wrong, from mere impulse. That it should never have entered his mind to build an altar to God before, this was the point on which the Spirit of God directed that the sacred historian should pronounce emphatically. How keenly significant is that parenthetical sentence—"The same was the first altar which he built to the Lord!" It seems to say to us, God notices when you build the first altar, when you first set it up, whether it be in the secret chamber or in the family. He knows the date of each secret religious transaction, keeps account when it was done, and how long an interval transpired before it was entered upon. 3. It was of a kind which allowed him to put God on one side, when he was too busy to attend to Him. Real religion will ever put God first—first, as the Object whose glory is sought; and first, as the Being on whose aid we must, in the spirit of humble dependence, rely. The multiplication of duties and engagements in this busy world may sometimes press heavily upon the religious professor; but at such seasons they really serve as tests of character. If he be truly what he professes to be, his sincerity will be seen in this, that he will not allow his busiest cares to interfere with fellowship with God. 4. It does not appear to have been characterised by the slightest self-suspicion, and there is constantly to be detected throughout a singular want of humility. It never seems to have entered his thoughts that he could, by any possibility, have been in the wrong; but he was most ready to suppose that anyone else might be to blame. In the right direction of the lots as they were cast, it was the evident design of God to bring out to view the evil of Saul inconsiderateness. He was the only culpable person, and God made that fact evident. Now, one would have thought that if anything could have brought him to a sense of his error, it would have been the discovery that his rash decree and oath had implicated his own son, Jonathan, in liability to suffering and death. But, no! he did not see it; he would not see it. Our indignation rises when we hear him say, "God do so and more also: for thou

shalt surely die, Jonathan;" and we are ready to exclaim, "What! another oath? Has not one done mischief enough? cannot you see it? do you not feel it?" Nothing can exceed the hardening influence of that professed religion which leaves a man unsuspicious and ignorant of himself. (*J. A. Miller.*) *The rash oath*:—Though Samuel could not spare time to seek the mind and will of God, he would follow the devices of his own heart, and lean to his own understanding. He made a rash vow. He stands here as a warning to me and you. When we have been very much pressed with business or hurried with distress, how short have we been in prayer! how remiss in seeking the Lord! And then, when our conscience was a little uneasy, we have tried to quiet it with some foolish resolutions, thereby bringing ourselves into bondage and sin. As if the more to expose the folly of Saul's vow, the wearied and worn Israelites come to a wood where delicious food was ready to drop into their mouths; they might almost have eaten as they ran. Ah, Israel! how kindly would your heavenly, your rejected King, have supplied and refreshed you, while the king whom you have chosen does but distress and oppress you. A soldier of Jesus knows what it is after climbing some craggy rock, and after many a hard struggle with his enemies, to get a taste of that precious word which is sweeter than honey to his mouth (*Ps. cxix 103*). His downcast eyes are lightened—he again sees him who is invisible—he is satisfied with marrow and fatness, and praises his God with joyful lips. The poor people became extremely faint for want of food; and as soon as ever the set time was expired, they flew upon the spoil, and, ravenous as they were, did eat with the blood, thus breaking a direct command of God, while they had so scrupulously kept the commandment of a man. God had commanded them not to eat the blood of the sacrifices: probably this command was given to keep up a lively remembrance that it was blood, even the blood of Jesus only, that could atone for sin. Saul puts a stop to this, and, with a further show of devotion, builds an altar unto the Lord. Alas, poor Saul! thou art not the only one of whom it will be said, "He did many things, but left undone the one thing needful." Though this oath of Saul was so rash and foolish, yet how sacred is an oath with our God. Though only one, and he the well-beloved Jonathan, had broken it, and that too ignorantly, still God must avenge a broken oath. Oh, righteous Father! what a warning, what a word of comfort is here! Poor swearer! it has a dark side for thee. Will God thus remember, thus take notice of a curse? And wilt thou dare to curse thyself, thy wife, thy children, thy neighbour, thy cattle, thine eyes, thy limbs, and then say, "Tush, God hath forgotten?" Instead of profiting by the trouble that his rash oath had already brought upon the people, Saul adds yet another, saying, "As the Lord liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan, my son, he shall surely die." The people, wiser than the headstrong king, rescue the well-beloved Jonathan, giving him, in a few words, as high a character as can be given of a worm. "He hath wrought with God." To walk with God, and to work with God, should just form the summary of a believer's life and occupation. It is not confined to one or two of his children, but this honour have all his saints. (*Helen Plumptre.*) *Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening*.—*A bad saving of time*:—It is plain enough, this refusing the people time for eating that they might swiftly pursue, was really a pernicious saving of time; was really a hindrance rather than a help. For, through lack of food, the people became so exhausted that they could not pursue. This bad saving of time is but an illustration of the sort of time-saving many of us are frequently at in these last years of the nineteenth century. 1. How frequently young people make such bad saving of time when they refuse themselves the food of preparation for future service, by using the time of their youth in too great devotion to other things. The young man in business whose attention is on the simple getting through anyhow with his duty, is making this bad saving of time. The young woman whose chief care is society rather than thoroughness and deftness in the knowledges and services that specially belong to women, is making such bad saving of her time. They set Michael Angelo at carving a statue in snow. Lost time for the great sculptor, for the statue being finished could only melt! Such as these are carving statues out of snow, and poor ones at that. 2. How frequently people make such bad saving of time when, like Saul refusing to let the people take time for eating, they refuse to take time for the duty next them, and use that time in dreaming about or dreading the duty. 3. How frequently people make bad saving of time by refusing to seize the present time for becoming

Christians, using the time meanwhile for the pursuit of other things. (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. And dipped it in an honey-comb and put his hand to his mouth.—*The honey of God's Word*:—There were three kinds of honey: 1. That which was made by bees. 2. That which was distilled from the trees. 3. That which was made from grape-juice, and largely exported. The kind Jonathan ate, was doubtless the product of the honey-bee. This honey had a marvellous effect upon Jonathan. "It enlightened his eyes;" it strengthened his body so that the faintness which produced dimness of vision disappeared. God's Word is our honey. The provision is abundant, like as was the honey in wild profusion in the woods which Jonathan entered. It is sweet. It gives strength. Above all, it has an enlightening power. 1. The Word of God enlightens the intellect. The Bible is God's great school-book to man. 2. It enlightens the moral sense. The needle of the compass must be magnetised if it is to point always to the north; the watch must be set by the sun, if it is to give correct time; so the conscience, to point always heavenward, must be brought under the influence of the Scriptures. 3. It brings light to the eye which has grown dim with sorrow. 4. It reveals the world in its true light. 5. It reveals the true nature of sin. 6. It reveals the sinner's Saviour—the living, the crucified, the resurrected, the interceding, the justifying Saviour. Let us gather up three or four practical suggestions:—The honey of God's Word is free, and is adapted to everybody. It never loses its sweetness or refreshing power. It is good to begin every day with a taste of it. It is wasted honey if you do not partake of it. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

Ver. 43. I did but taste a little honey.—*A little thorn makes a great pain*:—When Admiral Blake after driving the enemy from the ocean was on his return voyage to England, he was met at the mouth of the Thames by a storm which hindered his passage and made havoc of his sails, whereupon the Admiral said in a pet, "Shall we who have braved the ocean storms be drowned in this ditch?" Of course, when the gale subsided, the brave Admiral was able to sail up to London to receive the honours which awaited him. It is often the storm in the little ditch which throws us on our beam-ends, and what is commonly called the "storm in a teapot," is sometimes more to be dreaded than the tempest of an ocean. It is not always great failings that ruin us; it is oftener the little faults and flaws in our character and conduct, which by accumulation damage us irretrievably so far as earthly prospects are concerned. Resolutions and ideas which at the moment have been esteemed as of little importance, have often caused great results. You will remember in English history that our Parliament resolved to put a duty on the tea received into the American ports, which then belonged to this country. It was a little thing to do, but its result was the freedom of America from the yoke of England, and the formation of the United States. It has been wisely said that "it is but the littleness of man that sees no greatness in trifles." Let us look at one or two phases in which little things produce great personal results. I. **WE OFTEN MAKE OURSELVES WRETCHED ABOUT LITTLE THINGS.** Great calamities we overcome by bearing them patiently; but little troubles overcome us because we chafe under them. A very little thing may put your body out of condition or even endanger your life. When you are eating carelessly; a fish bone not an inch long may stick in your throat; and there is no peace until you get it out. When you are walking or riding on a dusty day, a tiny speck gets into your eye, and you cannot rest or sleep until that irritating speck of matter is removed. Everybody has probably at some time, after a day's "blackberrying" experienced considerable pain in some finger from a little thorn. There are little annoyances of a mental kind which are apt to worry us if we do not learn wisdom from their recurrence. We stop to take the stone from our shoe or wipe the speck from our eye; but we let these little worrying mental unpleasantnesses rankle in our mind and heart like a permanent splinter in the flesh. I refer to the little things said at home or abroad which ruffle us because they go against our notion of what is right and just to ourselves; and as we do not dismiss them from our thoughts, but, as Burns says, "nurse our wrath to keep it warm," they become fixed in us like a graft in a tree, and sometimes remain as torments to people until they die. Do right; trust in God, and do not be over-much troubled about what anybody says about you. If the aspersion be true, amend your ways, and be grateful to the fault-finder; but if

what is said be untrue, why should you mind it? "Let the galled jade wince;" but if what is said of you is not true, you are not "galled," and should therefore go on your way rejoicing. One of the most laughable pictures I ever saw was from the pencil of Leech in the pages of *Punch*. It depicted a stout gentleman chasing a blue-bottle fly, which had disturbed his nap after dinner. With his knotted handkerchief, he banged at the blue-bottle, broke the windows and ornaments, tumbled down the chairs, worked himself into a passion, but could not capture or quiet his tormentor. Our fume and fuss over the trifling annoyance of life must seem quite as ridiculous in the eyes of the angels. II. WE OFTEN MAKE OTHER PEOPLE MISERABLE BY SOMETHING WE DO OR SAY, OR BY SOMETHING WE OMIT TO DO OR SAY. When a man with an infectious disease is carried in a coach to the infirmary, we expect the cabman will say to us, "There has been a man in here with the smallpox, and I have not yet had the cab fumigated; so you should not enter it." That would be a just and kind act, but if he says, "All right, sir," and we jump into the cab, we may catch the infection. In the same way, by our thoughtlessness, or perhaps by our haste and unkindness, we may say things that hurt others like an infection. And what is strange, the most sensitive and best educated are often the worst offenders. It may be a little thing we say or do, but it greatly hurts other people. It is shamefully wrong for any of us to say and do things which may spread mental or mortal contagion. An unguarded and unfounded remark may upset a whole neighbourhood, just as one squeaking puppy may keep the inhabitants of a whole street awake all night. A few thoughtless words may destroy the peace not only of a family but of an entire community. We ought to be careful to "give no offence in anything." How unpleasant when some neighbour's unswept chimney takes fire and emits volumes of noxious smoke! Let us be careful to keep our moral chimney swept, so that our words and actions may not become like offensive smoke. Let us try to bless the world and make it pleasanter; why should any man's words injure and deface the world? III. In the third place, let me remind you that THINGS WHICH SEEM TO BE OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE OFTEN PRODUCE GREAT RESULTS. A small leak may sink a great ship, and a trifling escape of gas, if neglected, may blow up your house. So, these little flaws and faults and omissions in your moral nature which you think will never be noticed and can do no harm, are enough to ruin you. Those who by wilful neglect or carelessness cause the death of others are their murderers; and even if men neglect their little vices until they become uncontrollable, they are responsible for their own doom. Take care of the littles; for great results may come from little things. In thousands of instances little things have produced great results. So little deeds of kindness and self-denial often make or mar a life's happiness. "Despise not the day of small things." Do not suppose you are too little to be of any consequence in this great world. No one has been created without a purpose and a mission. (W. Birch.) *A little honey*:—"Stop the beginnings," said the old Romans; arrest the evil in the bud; put your foot upon the spark and stamp out the conflagration. Behold how great a forest a little fire kindleth. "I did but taste a little honey on the end of the rod in mine hand, and lo! I must die!" 1. "A little honey." So all sin appears at the moment of conception. Had the devil proffered to Jonathan the whole land of Canaan, "flowing with milk and honey," assured him of its heirship and possession, as he pressed on in eager pursuit of his father's enemies, he had not succeeded; but he offered a little on the end of his staff, which he could eat as he ran, and instantly the young warrior was caught by the bait and snared. So it has ever been. By little and little. The merchant of Panama, says Beecher, builds his warehouse near the docks. He drives into the water the strongest piles which his native woods can furnish. He is anxious to lay a foundation which fire cannot reach, and neither wind nor wave displace. Thereon he erects his store-houses and bestows his goods and fruits. Alas! for human foresight. Presently a small madrepore, whose presence a microscope can scarcely detect, fastens upon the pile; gradually it draws to its aid a myriad little perforators from the water, and by the implements at their command they eat it, saw it, bore and honeycomb it, so that in a few years, if a child but touch it, it will crumble to pieces. Even so, under the most insignificant of forms, in the quietest manner, by the weakest of agencies, little sins, vices, foolish habits and excesses, work into and undermine the strongest and purest characters, renders abortive the noblest of purposes, work wreck and ruin in the grandest of lives, till the man, or family, or church, or nation affected by them, honeycombed

at the heart, perishes in corruption. 2. "A little honey!" We might consider how often our "little sins" come between us and our Maker, shut out from us all true and clear views of His character, and interrupt the sunshine of His favour and love to us in Christ. An eminent London minister, in one of his books, tells us he was once sailing over a beautiful Scottish lake. He raised his eyeglass to get a better view of Ben Lomond; but a small leaf, hanging across the line of his vision, shut out the entire mountain. And something much less than a leaf could have marred the prospect. He had only to breathe on the glass for a moment, and the dimness produced on its surface would have been sufficient to intercept and becloud for him all the beauty of the world. And little sins, fashionable vices, selfish indulgences in things forbidden, freaks of temper, fits of petty wilfulness, take off the edge of our keenest feelings of attachment to God and His service, blunt our susceptibilities of receiving Divine impressions, chill the ardour of youthful enthusiasm, and shut us out from the influences of the world to come. "A little honey!" Our Lord took three of his disciples to act as a sort of body-guard, and keep watch, while he prayed in Gethsemane. Eight more held vigil on an outer circle. But the day had been long, and the journey had been fatiguing, and the work had been exciting, and their eyes were heavy with sleep. The "little honey" of refreshing slumber was not to be resisted. Their Lord withstood the temptation and was ready. The traitor found Him prepared. But His followers were surprised in their sentinel duty, and "they all forsook Him and fled." A little sleep! 3. "I did but taste a little honey . . . and, lo! I must die!" Israel very naturally took one view of Jonathan's case, and his father as naturally took another. In the eyes of the army it was but a trifling oversight; in the eyes of the king it was a capital offence. And our "little sins" appear in different lights as they are viewed in the court of heaven and before the tribunal of our fellow-men. Had "Adam's transgression" been punished on the day wherein it was committed, and the guilty pair been swept from the earth and hurried to their account, the severity of the penalty might have seemed to them disproportioned to the offence. But ages have elapsed since then, and that "little sin" has borne its fruit. What should be its punishment now? Thank God! the question need not be put. It has already been asked and answered. It brought the Son of God out of heaven. We did but taste a little honey, and, lo! He must die. Sin, so sweet to us, was the bitterness of death to Him. But let us remember that, like Jonathan, we are sons of the King. Our interests are identical with those of our Father in heaven. What seems a "little sin" to us is a great source of grief and wrong to Him. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Let us be true to our God and Saviour, in little things as well as great, striving to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke . . . holding forth the word of life." (*R. Balgarnie, D.D.*) *Forbidden honey*:—What multitudes of people in all ages have been damaged by forbidden honey, by which I mean temptation, delicious and attractive, but damaging and destructive! 1. Corrupt literature, fascinating but deathful, comes in this category. Taste for pure literature is poisoned by this scum of the publishing house. Corrupt literature is doing more to-day for the disruption of domestic life than any other cause. When a woman, young or old, gets her head thoroughly stuffed with the modern novel she is in appalling peril. See all the forests of good American literature dripping with honey. Why pick up the honey-combs that have in them the fiery bees which will sting you with an eternal poison while you taste it? 2. Stimulating liquids also come into the category of temptations delicious but deathful. 3. Furthermore, the gamester's indulgence must be put in the list of temptations delicious but destructive. I have crossed the ocean eight times, and always one of the best rooms has, from morning until late at night, been given up to gambling practices. To many there is a complete fascination in games of hazard or the risking of money on possibilities. Down under its power went glorious Oliver Goldsmith, and Gibbon the famous historian, and Charles Fox the renowned statesman, and in olden times senators of the United States, who used to be as regularly at the gambling-house all night as they were in the halls of legislation by day. Honey at the start, eternal catastrophe at the last. 4. Stock-gambling comes into the same catalogue. 5. The best honey is not like that which Jonathan took on the end of the rod and brought to his lips, but that which God puts on the banqueting table of mercy, at which we are all invited to sit. When a man may sit at the King's banquet, why will he go down the steps and contend

for the refuse and bones of a hound's kennel? "Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb," says David, is the truth of God. "With honey out of the rock would I have satisfied thee," says God to the recreant. Here is honey gathered from the blossoms of trees of life, and with a rod made out of the wood of the Cross I dip it up for all your souls. The poet Hesiod tells of an ambrosia and a nectar, the drinking of which would make men live for ever, and one sip of the honey from the Eternal Rock will give you eternal life with God. Come off of the malarial levels of a sinful life. Come and live on the uplands of grace where the vineyards sun themselves. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is gracious!" Be happy now and happy for ever. For those who take a different course the honey will turn to gall. Beware of the forbidden honey. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 45. And the people said unto Saul, shall Jonathan die.—Rights of the people:—This historical fact was recorded for our instruction; and teaches us that when a people properly remonstrate against the unlawful, unjust, or cruel conduct of their rulers, they may reasonably hope to succeed. **I. I am to show, THAT A PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO REMONSTRATE AGAINST THE UNLAWFUL, UNJUST, OR CRUEL CONDUCT OF THEIR RULERS.** To remonstrate properly signifies, to make a strong representation, or to offer reasons, against something said, proposed, or done, which appears to be improper, unjust, unlawful, or cruel. This bare explanation of the term applies, that it is the natural and unalienable right of all mankind, to remonstrate whenever they think they are really abused by those in authority. The child has a natural and unalienable right to remonstrate against any treatment of his parents which appears to be cruel, or unjust, or even highly improper. The servant has a natural and unalienable right to remonstrate against the unlawful, unjust, or oppressive conduct of his civil ruler. This natural and unalienable right of remonstrance is essential to all civil liberty. The British Government certainly grants this right to the people, who have often and lately remonstrated with success. Our federal and state constitutions expressly allow the people to remonstrate, and they have exercised this right on many occasions. If we have not the right of remonstrance, we have no right at all. Any other people have a right to remonstrate, or offer good reasons against the unlawful, unjust, or cruel conduct of their rulers. They are neither to be punished, nor even blamed for remonstrating in a proper manner, on any proper occasion. **II. THIS IS NOT ONLY THEIR RIGHT, BUT THEIR DUTY.** Rulers are clothed with authority for the purpose of doing good, and not for the purpose of doing evil. Their civil powers are all derived and limited, and consequently they are responsible for their official conduct. This is a duty which they owe to God and to one another. It was the duty of Judah to remonstrate against the unnatural and nefarious conduct of his brethren, who proposed to shed and conceal the innocent blood of Joseph. It was the duty of Ahimelech the priest to remonstrate against Saul's slaying him and his father's house, for his innocently and benevolently supplying David's wants. It was the duty of Esther to remonstrate against the fatal decree of Abasuerus; and had she neglected or refused to remonstrate against it, she would have been guilty of bringing destruction upon herself, her friends, and her whole nation. After Jeremiah had been unjustly cast into the dungeon, and taken out by Jedekiah the king, it was his duty to remonstrate against being remanded back again. It was the duty of Stephen to remonstrate, with his dying breath, against the unrighteous and cruel conduct of his malignant persecutors. And it was a duty which Paul owed to himself, to remonstrate against the high priest, who commanded him to be smitten in an unjust and illegal manner. If it was the duty of the people of Israel to remonstrate against the mal-administration of Saul and David, who were the Lord's anointed, we may justly conclude, that it is the duty of the people of this day, to remonstrate against the unjust, unconstitutional, and oppressive measures of those, whom they have raised to places of power and trust. **III. THAT IF A PEOPLE DO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT AND PERFORM THEIR DUTY, IN PROPERLY REMONSTRATING AGAINST THE UNLAWFUL, UNJUST, AND CRUEL CONDUCT OF THEIR RULERS, THEY MAY REASONABLY HOPE TO SUCCEED.** 1. This mode of seeking redress of public and private grievances has often proved successful. It is not a vain thing for a people to lift up their united and powerful voice against public measures which they know and feel to be unconstitutional, unjust, and oppressive. There is always ground to hope that their proper and just remonstrances will have a powerful and salutary

effect. For, 2. This mode of treating civil rulers has a natural tendency to impress their minds with a deep sense of their duty and interest to guard against or rectify their designed or undesigned errors. Reasonable remonstrances are suited to enlighten their understandings; just remonstrances are suited to awaken their consciences; tender remonstrances are suited to excite their tenderness and compassion; and bold and spirited remonstrances are suited to alarm their fears of losing their popularity, their places, their interests, and even their lives. Proper remonstrances are the best weapons to attack corrupt rulers in their most vulnerable parts. Though they may not feel the obligation of duty, yet they may feel the obligation of interest, to review their conduct, rectify their errors, and redress the grievances of which the people justly and unitedly complain. 3. A people may humbly hope that God will approve of their properly remonstrating against the corrupt conduct of their rulers. The righteous Lord loves righteousness, and abhors unrighteousness, oppression, and cruelty. God has the hearts of rulers in his hand, and can dispose them to treat their injured, oppressed, aggrieved subjects, with equity, condescension, and tenderness. He disposed Pharaoh to regard the remonstrances of Moses, and to let his oppressed people go free. He disposed Cyrus to proclaim liberty to the captive Jews, and even to assist them in their return to their native land. God still stands in the congregation of the mighty, and judges among the gods. It now appears, I trust, that the leading sentiment in this discourse is true; and if it be true, it naturally suggests some things which deserve the serious regard of both rulers and subjects at the present dark and distressing day. 1. If a people have an unquestionable right to remonstrate against the unjust and oppressive conduct of their rulers, then it would be the indispensable duty of their rulers to hear their remonstrances, and grant them proper relief. Though they have a discretionary right to hear, or not to hear, any remonstrances of any part, or of the whole body of the people, yet they are responsible for the abuse of this discretionary power. Their civil authority does by no means dissolve their moral obligation to rule in justice. The right of the people to remonstrate necessarily involves the duty of rulers to hear their remonstrances with attention and impartiality. 2. If the people have the right to remonstrate against what they really believe to be oppressive and injurious in the administration of government; then it discovers a corrupt and tyrannical disposition in their rulers, to take away, or even to attempt to take away from them, this natural, unalienable, and important right. It has always been the policy of despotic rulers to suppress the liberty of speech upon political subjects. They may attempt to destroy the right of remonstrance, or restrain the liberty of speech respecting the public measures of public men, by sophistry, artifice, or threats. They may artfully insinuate that if the people privately complain, or publicly remonstrate, they manifest disaffection, disrespect, and disobedience towards those whom they ought to esteem, revere, and obey. If this sophistry fail of answering their purpose they may throw out terrible threats, and positively declare, that all complaints and remonstrances are the high crimes of treason and rebellion. This language ought to be alarming to a people in a free government, and put them upon their guard against those who would seduce or awe them into silence under all the evils and calamities which their unjust and arbitrary measures have brought upon the nation. 3. It clearly appears from what has been said that it is our present duty, as a people, to remonstrate with freedom and energy against those measures of our general government which have brought us to the brink of ruin. 4. That if we properly remonstrate against the conduct which has brought us into our wretched and dangerous situation we may reasonably hope to succeed, and speedily effect such a change of men and of measures as will restore peace, safety, and prosperity to our bleeding country. Decent, just, and spirited remonstrances have often made deep impressions upon the hearts and consciences of both good and bad rulers, and prevailed upon them to redress the grievances of their subjects. Haughty and arbitrary as the kings and parliaments of Great Britain may be supposed to have been, they have generally paid respect and attention to the opinions, the feelings, and the complaints of the nation. 5. We may fairly infer from what has been said that our men of eminence, who have uniformly and boldly remonstrated against the ill-concerted measures of government, have acted a noble and patriotic part, and deserve to be highly esteemed and applauded. Finally, this subject calls upon us to exercise unfeigned gratitude to God for the public and private favours which He has bestowed upon us in this trying and distressing day. We ought to be thankful that He has given us wise and faithful

rulers, and by their instrumentality has preserved our rights and liberties, and restrained our powerful enemies from destroying our seaports, and spreading misery and destruction among us. Let us not lean to our own understandings, nor trust in our own hearts, but in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength. Let us submissively commit ourselves and our country to his wise and holy disposal; and resolve that though he slay us, yet we will trust in him. (N. Emmons, D.D.)

CHAPTER XV.

Vers. 2, 3. **Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel.**—*National sins and national punishments:*—We turn from Saul to the case of those against whom he was sent. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt." Then God does remember sin. He not only notices it, but remembers it. A lengthened period had transpired since the Amalekites had thus manifested their sympathy with the enemies of Israel, by throwing hindrances in the way of God's chosen people as they came out of Egypt to Canaan. And, to all appearance, their sin might have been regarded as consigned to oblivion. But God had declared that it should not be forgotten. (Exod. xvii. 14; Deut. xxv. 17-19.) Upon the oblivion of four centuries there broke the awful tones of Almighty Justice: "I remember that which Amalek did." From that Infinite Mind there had been no obliteration of the crime; clear as the day on which it had been committed, that sin stood out to view. "I remember." Divine forbearance with generation after generation had been long, but upon them that forbearance had been lost, and it is evident they had not profited by it. They still remained the foes of Israel; their conduct as a nation was marked by excessive cruelty; and it was a horrible notoriety which their king had obtained for the multitudes of mothers whom, in his bloodthirstiness, his sword had rendered childless. In the determination on the part of God now to punish, the utterance of which was prefaced by those emphatic words, "I remember," we are distinctly taught the lesson that the conduct of nations is a point to which the eye of God is directed, and that it is the matter for which His just penalty will be reserved. Whole nations come within the reach of His rod. By the individuals composing a community, and whose personal welfare or woe is necessarily identified with the condition of the community, there is a great danger that national sin should be regarded rather as an abstraction than as a reality, rather as an ideal than a substantial criminality. But it is not thus that God, in the incident before us, deals with it. He affixes it, as a substantive charge, upon the community. We have a rule here to which we find no exception. But nowhere does this rule meet with so fearful an exemplification as in the case of that very people whose guardian God showed Himself to be in this act of visiting Amalek's transgression—that very Israel on whose behalf He was now standing up to repel insult and to avenge injury. "I remember"—read it in those seventy years' exile from the land which had been given for an inheritance—that long and dreary period, during which Zion's history was thus announced in plaintive tones by the prophet, "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow!" &c. "I remember"—read it in its reiterated and double-telling tones in that second destruction which succeeded a second opportunity given to the Hebrew people of a sound national repentance and reformation—that second opportunity which was lost when formalism was substituted for spiritual religion. Hark to the words of mingled compassion and judgment which fall from His lips as He stands over against the city and weeps, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," &c. If national sin brings with it national calamity, then the lengthening out of our prosperity must depend on the caution which is exercised, lest any sin should be permitted and indulged, until it shall become distinctive of our national character. Is there nothing among ourselves over which there floats, audible to the men who seek the best welfare of their country and deprecate its woe, the sound of that sentence, "I remember?" Are not its murmurs to be heard at this moment, amid political excitements and difficulties of administration?

"I remember" the Sabbaths which are systematically broken by those who take their pleasure on my holy day. "I remember" the intemperance of those who "rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them." "I remember" the want of truthfulness in the manner of conducting business, the unjust advantages taken of the buyer, the false representations made by the seller, although my word has declared that "a false balance is abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight." "I remember" the concealed iniquity of men who, with a fancied impunity, perpetrated the foulest crimes, reckless of every consideration but that of inconvenient exposure. Our patriotism, to be effective, must be of the right stamp; and to prove itself of this stamp it must itself consent to learn its lessons from that chief source of all instruction, the Scriptures—confirmed, as the sacred teachings are, by the dispensations of Divine Providence. There may be a diversity in the manner in which individuals may have been guilty, in reference to the sum total of the public guilt. Some may have been the direct actors, and others may have been partakers in their sins. From all which has been stated it will follow—1. That it is a duty constantly incumbent upon us, as members of the community, to inquire into our personal relation to that public criminality of which God says, "I remember it," and to make it the matter of our individual repentance and humiliation. If personally, and through God's grace, these things cannot be described as committed by me, yet do I give any sanction to them in others? Do I protest against them? Do I exert my influence to lessen their amount? 2. The sins of nations, which call down wrath, being thus the accumulation of the sins of individuals, those will do most to prevent public calamity, to ensure national prosperity, and thus will do most for their country, who make a stand for God against that which would displease Him; who, in their own immediate spheres, seek, in dependence upon His grace, to yield to His authority, and to illustrate His religion; and who "let their light so shine before men that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven." Personal religion is the best patriotism. The fear of God pervading men's hearts is the surest provision against national calamity, because it is the opposite of national sin. Go, then, and exercise your civil privileges, your social rights, in the fear of the God of nations. Set Him at your right hand. (*J. A. Miller.*) *The commission of judgment*:—The Amalekites are supposed by some to have descended from Amalek, grandson of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 12.) But against this view it may be forcibly objected: 1. That a nation so powerful and so widely diffused, could scarcely have sprung up in so short a period; 2. That the seat of Esau and his posterity was much more easterly than the realm of the Amalekites; and 3. That it is not easy to suppose such near relatives of Israel exposed to such a doom, while Edom and Moab were so scrupulously spared on account of their relationship. But it is not improbable that a brave and warlike chief like Esau might, through his family, wield a powerful influence among the desert tribes, and even supply them with a name. The matter, however, is not of importance, compared with the consideration of their crime and its punishment. The assault of the Amalekites was an offence of high aggravation. It was made when Israel had newly entered on their wanderings (Exod. xvii. 8-16); and as the first onset of enemies it was marked by singular audacity, and attended with peculiar danger to Israel. They were ringleaders. They broke the peace, and inaugurated a hostile dealing with the people. Moreover, their attack was entirely unprovoked. Besides, the manner of attack was treacherous and cruel (Deut. xxv. 17-19), "he smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary." Hence, in Deut. xxv. 18, the real point of the charge against Amalek is this: "he feared not God." There was something peculiarly daring and insolent in his conduct. He seems to have deliberately chosen the earliest period of assaulting them, undismayed by the terrible doings of the past, and undeterred by the pledged protection and guidance of the future. It was an eager and determined defiance of the God of Israel. Such an attitude and bearing must be providentially taken notice of. The sovereign Lord will set Himself right at once with the nations. "His counsel shall stand." The daring sinners have despised His covenant with Israel; He will meet this by another covenant regarding them. Their destruction is decided by oath. Such is the whole case against Amalek. It might seem as if the bare statement of it were enough to vindicate the Divine dealing with them. But inasmuch as ungodly men have inveighed against this dealing, and have drawn from it dark colours wherewith to sketch a gloomy caricature of the Most High; and, particularly, inasmuch

as natural feeling even in the good is ever liable to a relapse into disloyal sympathy with offending fellows, a few further remarks on the subject may do some useful service. 1. Whatever objection may be raised against the dealings of God in the case of Amalek applies equally to innumerable similar cases. Take, for example, the destruction of Lisbon by an earthquake in 1755. Here we find actually occurring substantially the same woe that was denounced against Amalek. There is the same sudden, violent, widespread, indiscriminate ruin. The only differences are these: The destruction affected only a portion of the people; and the instrument employed was a blind material force, instead of an army of rational and moral beings. But these affect not the real identity of the two cases. On the question of justice, or of mercy, they fall into the same category. He who impeaches the justice of Amalek's overthrow must be prepared in consistency to carry his condemnation over the whole breadth of God's providential government. To slay a great criminal, fierce, malignant, and strong, was in one view an act of self-defence, in another, an act of retribution; and to do it at the command of a holy God was a test and a training of the highest spiritual affections of a creature. 2. No individual Amalekite suffered more than he deserved. To this it will be immediately answered: This is impossible, for children were involved in the doom of adult sinners. We own the fact, and the difficulty growing out of it. We are persuaded, moreover, that no reasoning of man shall ever fully dissipate the mysterious darkness that hangs about the death of infants. But the mystery and gloom refer mainly to the fact, not to the matter of its occurrence. It is indeed a sad and awful thing to see young buds torn violently from the stem of life by the rude hand of war. But, alas! the hand of other spoilers has made larger havoc. Disease has filled, by millions, more infant graves than war. Will they who cavil at the commanded slaughter of the sword explain and vindicate the larger mortality of disease? They call the ills of infancy natural. It is a gross mistake. They are unnatural, abnormal, manifestly punitive. And when we say punitive, we approach nearer a solution of the great problem—instead of, as some affirm, adding to its gloom. For whether does it present most difficulty, to view this wide-wasting death of yet irresponsible beings as the infliction of pure sovereignty, or as the result of violated law? Is it not clear that when we interpose the idea of a federal relationship, a principle of representation, by which sin transmits its doom, as by natural descent it transmits its virus, to each rising generation, we have advanced a step outwards from the dark nucleus of the difficulty. 3. The visitation of vengeance was a valuable means of moral influence. To Israel's heart it was fitted to carry impressive conviction of God's immovable determination to carry out His purposes of love, to be their bulwark against surrounding heathenism, and to preserve them for the glories and the happiness of the future. To Israel's conscience it was fraught with most powerful stimulus—awfully reminding them of the lofty supremacy, unswerving veracity, and unsparing righteousness of their God. And so this dreadful sentence of extermination is most useful. The Lord has need of it. It is one of a series of judgments that lift their terrible tops in sight of hostile heathenism, and stand as sentinels of God around the sacred people. Human life is a sacred thing. But He surely knows this full well who has so carefully hedged it about, who marks even a sparrow's fall, and who has in gratuitous tenderness left yet to this abode of rebels its music and its flowers. And the honour of that mighty Lord, the safety of His people, the accomplishment of His grand remedial designs, are immeasurably more sacred. (*P. Richardson, B.A.*)

Vers. 11-23. It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king.—*Saul rejected*:—The story is graphic and pathetic. This is Saul's victory and also his defeat. Our defeats are often wrapped up in our victories. Some of our most dismal failures are hidden from us by the glare of a partial and disastrous success. Saul succeeded and failed. He conquered Agag, but disobeyed God. And so the glory of his victory is lost in the darkness of his defeat. A man may conquer the greatest of earth's kings, but his life is a consummate failure if he disobeys the King of kings. And so, instead of praising Saul's victory let us meditate on Saul's sin. His sin was the sin of disobedience, the sin by which our first parents fell. In Saul's defence of his sin we possess a study of conscience unsurpassed in the literature of the world. Samuel on hearing of Saul's disobedience goes to meet him. Saul is the first to speak. "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." Was he honest in saying this? He may have

been. Other men have lied as outrageously and still believed themselves to be speaking the truth. The heart is deceitful above all things and is oftentimes unconscious of its own deceitfulness. To be sure he has preserved the life of Agag, but then imprisonment is a heavier punishment to a proud king than death itself. The people have been destroyed. This is the one thing essential. No danger can come from a king in chains. Saul has whittled down the Divine commands a little, but only a little; and who is so foolish as to think that God will notice the swerving of a hair's breadth from what He commands? And reasoning thus we sometimes pare off the edges of God's commandments, blissfully unconscious that we are doing anything positively wrong. To be sure, we are not keeping God's commandment to the letter, but He does not expect us to keep it so. It is enough if we kill the Amalekites. There is no need of killing Agag. We take delight in slaying the Amalekites, but we are opposed to killing Agag. And later on we discover to our sorrow that Agag is the chief of the Amalekites and that ruin lurks in the survival of anything which God commands us to destroy. Saving Agag costs many a child of God his crown. "I have performed the commandment of the Lord," so Saul says, and while he speaks his sentences are punctuated by the howling of oxen and the bleating of sheep. A man's conscience may be so drugged that it will not cry out against him, but some outside voice is sure to break forth in condemnation. God never leaves Himself without a witness. And if the animals are dumb, then the inanimate earth will speak. Abel's blood will cry even from the ground. Saul had said nothing about the sheep, and so the sheep supplied what Saul had forgotten to mention. In their innocence they bleated out Saul's guilt. The universe is so constructed that a guilty man cannot hide his sin. You assert your innocence, and yet my senses take knowledge of the evidences of your guilt. You say you do not drink too much; what meaneth, then, this reddening of the eyes and trembling of the hand? You say your heart is clean; what meaneth then this rottenness that trickles now and then into your talk? You say you are an honest man; what meaneth then this style of living which runs beyond the limits of your income? You say you are a Christian; what mean these scores of duties unperformed, bleating evidences of your unfaithfulness? "And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites." Mark that word "they." We might have expected it. When a man is driven into a corner, the most convenient trap-door through which he can make his escape is that little word "they." Conscience, when stirred, endeavours to shift responsibility. "They did it." So says every man not brave enough to face the consequences of his own misdeeds. Why do you not, O preacher, preach spiritual and Scriptural sermons? Do not begin your answer with, "Well, my people!" And why, O Christian man and woman, do you not inaugurate that reform which your town needs? Please do not say anything about the people. Let each man bear his own responsibility without flinching. But even those of us who are most ready to make a scapegoat of the people do not wish to be too hard on them. We would be merciful and considerate. We can see reasons why the people act as they do. "The people spared the best of the sheep." Only the best. There was good reason for that. Why destroy the best of the sheep? Why cause unnecessary destruction? Extravagance certainly is not pleasing to God. We have used the same argument many a time. We believe in saving the best of the sheep. We are so afraid of being reckless that we drop into disobedience. We would rather disobey God than kill one extra sheep. We are as afraid of killing good sheep as Judas was of wasting precious ointment and for the same reason. Many of God's commands sound reckless, and so we curb His Divine impetuosity by our prudence. We do not hesitate to kill the best sheep for our own banquets, but when it comes to killing them for God that is quite another matter. But the people in this case had not preserved the sheep for selfish uses. They had kept them with lofty and beautiful intentions. "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." To put these sheep to religious uses is certainly better than to slay them indiscriminately in the fury of war. God said to slay both ox and sheep, but it matters not to Him how they are slain. So Saul reasoned and so do we reason. There is a streak of the Jesuit in us all. If the end is good, we will not be too punctilious about the means. God cares for results. Methods are of comparative unimportance. The church must meet its expenses. It matters little how we raise the money, providing we raise it. It makes no difference how we get people to church, providing we get them. The Bible must be defended. It matters little what arguments are used, providing

the blessed Book is saved. The sheep are to be slain. It matters little how or where they are slain, whether on the altar or on the side of one of God's hills. It must be acknowledged that God in His word lays tremendous emphasis on the How, but if we are only zealous to increase His glory we feel confident He will not scrutinise too closely our spirit and methods. This is Saul's apology. It gives us a full-length portrait of the man. While he speaks we feel we are looking on a soul going to pieces, a moral character in the process of disintegration, a king degenerating into a slave. Every sentence which he speaks tarnishes the gold in his crown and falls like a blow upon his sceptre, which first shivers and finally breaks. It is the sacrifice of the will which is pleasing to God. Obedience is the queen of the virtues. Disobedience is the mother of sins. It is the vine, and other sins are only branches. Because of disobedience Saul lost his crown, and so shall we, if like him disobedient, lose the inheritance which is ours. (*Charles E. Jefferson.*) *Saul rejected*:—On the top of the Hartz Mountains in Switzerland the figures of travellers, in certain states of the atmosphere, take on a gigantic size to the eye of an observer below, and every movement they make is exaggerated. In the career of King Saul, as it is presented to us in Scripture, we see the figure of a man raised to a dizzy height, his actions projected, as it were, upon the clouds, so that all mankind may learn from them the desired lesson that Jehovah reigns, and that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against him. Note—I. SAUL'S ELEVATION. If ever man was king by Divine right, it was Saul. Never were greatness and royalty more suddenly thrust upon one than in this case. The priest and prophet, Samuel, gave him his title of king. II. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE. This was seen plainly on two occasions: the first, when he sacrificed at Gilgal, contrary to an express command; the second, when he refused to smite Amalek utterly, and offer all the spoil to Jehovah. But these occasions simply brought to the surface an underlying state of disobedience which only waited its tempting inducements to appear. But before this last outward disobedience there had been a slowly increasing departure from the living God in the heart of the king, so that, when the wicked and justly punished Amalekites were put under the ban he was not equal to the occasion and he yielded to the temptation of the hour. The devoting of the whole nation to destruction was no arbitrary act of barbarism that assumed to be under Divine appointment, but a literal and genuine visitation from heaven upon those who richly deserved it. The phrase "utterly destroy" is in the original "put under the ban." This ban was an old custom, originating before the time of Moses, but formulated and regulated by him, as were so many other social customs amidst which Israel grew up. In its simplest form it was the devotion to God of any object, living or dead. III. THE GROUND OF SAUL'S REJECTION. It is stated in the briefest language. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath rejected thee from being king. The rejection was already an accomplished fact in the Divine purpose, although its execution was for a time delayed. In this complete rejection we are instructed in God's ways by seeing that it proceeded on no technical and superficial grounds, as if the Almighty was an austere man, reaping where He had not sowed, and eager to secure a reason for condemning His servant. Even under the old dispensation, how spiritual was God's claim; how identical with that which rests on us to-day. The sacrifices of God have always been a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Outward acts have never been accepted in place of an inward submission and penitence. IV. THE FALSE REPENTANCE OF SAUL. It had much of the appearance of a godly sorrow that leads to peace. It surely was sorrow. It showed an aroused and alarmed conscience. Saul comprehended himself; saw the conflict within between his better and worse nature. Again and again he awoke to his sin and folly with bitter tears in after days, but never reached the point where he could say, in the wonderful words of his successor, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." V. THE MYSTERY OF SIN AND PUNISHMENT. Who can understand his errors, or those of any man in ancient or modern times, delineated in the Bible or in our own literature? Who can find the key to a sinful life, and unlock all its mysteries and incongruities? What is sin but an irrational, abnormal, strange thing, making every one's life at points an enigma, and best described as a mystery in its origin, development, and results in eternity? Who shall attempt to fathom the connection between wrong-doing and punishment, and foresee the consequences of a single transgression? Who is to say what a sin is in its real nature, and what its results ought to be in a holy government? We cannot tell when our characters have become so consistent in evil that God passes judgment on us, and tears from

our hands all that He gave us, and for which we are called to live. God has left the consequences of sin in the unseen future, like the shadows of mountains when the sun is behind us. This may be because He wishes us to be more afraid of sin than of its results. This man, whose downfall was the result of his own misdeeds, was, in the hands of Providence, a scourge for Israel, sent to them, as we read, in God's anger. The career of a sinner can be understood only when we see to what uses it is put in the world's discipline. If we are obedient to God He will turn our lives into a blessing upon men. If we rebel, He still can use us, turning our actions into scourges. To each of us is offered a kingdom, invisible but real, as old as eternity. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *Saul's disobedience and rejection*:—The intoxication of power is upon him, impelling him directly in the teeth of the Divine warning. He is occupying dangerous ground. Our passage shows the turning-point in Saul's history. I. LET US OBSERVE THE OCCASION WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE CRISIS. God had given him a commission to ban the Amalekites, the ancient enemies of Israel. The crisis in Saul's life had come. He fails to meet it in the spirit of a true man of God. His soul finds temptation in a moment when power and success and human adulation have intoxicated him; he yields to the snare, and falls to rise no more. At the turning-point of his life he is weighed in the balances and found wanting. The whole sad transaction and all its terrible consequences are summed up in one word—disobedience to positive Divine command. It breaks upon us at once. It is complete and fully manifested in a single transaction. But definite steps led up to it. It can be accounted for. It should have been avoided. II. AS THE DISOBEDIENCE WAS COMPLETE AND INEXCUSABLE, SO THE PUNISHMENT WAS PROMPT, DEFINITE, AND FINAL. "God hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." Successive steps led to its accomplishment. God caused Samuel to withdraw from him. He took his good Spirit away, and allowed an evil spirit to come upon him. He was left to his own rash, self-willed, and self-pleasing nature. He was allowed to work out his own destruction and the ruin of his dynasty, while God quietly but diligently prepared a better man to take his place on the throne of Israel. A great and solemn principle emerges here—the basis-principle upon which all right and enduring relations to God must rest—to wit, obedience. There can be no happy relations between a sovereign Creator and dependent creatures upon any other scheme, even though that sovereign Creator be properly viewed as a tender Father. The whole question needs to be re-stated with firmness. The sentimentality of a spurious faith, which claims heaven and yet the right to please self, is a travesty upon the word of God and upon every serious utterance of human consciousness. And yet this sentimentality is seeking to interpret the preaching of salvation by the cross in the interest of selfish indulgence, and is going far to justify the sneer of the enemy, "that morals are divorced from religion;" for what are any Christian morals worth that do not mean obedience to the living God? Let Saul's sad fall by reason of disobedience warn us at this point. In conclusion we may draw out a few brief lessons. 1. The danger of a halfway surrender to God, a consecration which has its reservations. Such a course is an insult to God. It is the very worst spirit of bargain-making. It marks off a section of our individuality, into which God has no right to come with His demands. Saul was willing to serve God in being a king if he would have his way when the spoil was at hand. He was quite willing to fellowship Samuel and have his endorsement if he could sacrifice when he pleased. But this spirit brought him to a bad end. 2. See how disobedience demoralises the spirit and sets it upon unworthy shifts. His character drooped lower and lower as he sought his way out from the consequences of disobedience by unworthy shifts. When we have sinned it is better to be open and ingenuous with God and man, and, while sorrowing for the sin, meekly receive the consequences in the full purpose of immediate amendment. 3. The folly of those in authority, as parents, pastors or teachers, yielding to the tastes and entreaties of the young, the wayward, or the undisciplined for the privilege of doing that which is wrong either in itself or in its tendency. Saul pleaded that he yielded to the wishes of the people when he saved the best of the spoil. So with many now in the place of solemn and responsible authority. But this is simple weakness where we have the right to expect strength. This weakness does not lesson the guilt before God. (*W. G. Craig, D.D.*) *The commission given to Saul*:—The command given to Saul was unmistakable and imperative. And this was to be in fulfilment of the legacy of judgment and vengeance left to the people by Moses long before. In Moses' words you have hints of the real character and life of the Amalekites that are to be associated

with Samuel's words, in which he calls them "the sinners, the Amalekites." Here you have their character of bloodthirsty, treacherous marauders. The days of old needed the destruction of such as the Amalekites; and if Israel had to do the work it was needful that they should be utterly destroyed. It was better for the world to be without such sinners, and it was required, for Israel's sake, that Saul and his people should have no gain from the conquest. God often does thus with the ill-gotten wealth of wicked nations. Where are all the riches of the mighty monarchies of old? Where is the bloodstained wealth of the ruined Roman Empire? Who can tell? God swept it away, for a curse—the curse of conquest and oppression—was upon it. Consider, Saul's violation of the law of obedience. Saul gave himself to spoilation; the attempted shelter under fear of the people belied itself; his repeated words "that they had brought the spoil to sacrifice to the Lord thy God" were an attempt to justify sin by profession of good intention, and to degrade religious service of God into formal acts of ceremonial observance. The answer to all his excuses and explanations was simple and as imperative as the commands he had neglected, "Because thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king." There are many lessons taught us in these things, among which, let us note the following, for they touch solemn matters in the life of each of us. I. IT IS EVIDENT THAT A PROFESSEDLY GOOD OR CREDITABLE INTENTION WILL NOT JUSTIFY A BAD ACT. It is true that the real character of any act is in the intention of the doer; but you cannot judge acts as though they were isolated, and to be taken each on its own merits. The intention that is behind one act may itself be a depraved spiritual act or represent a spiritual state that God hates. II. NOR CAN GOD BE HONOURED IN ONE WAY AT THE COST OF DISHONOURING HIM IN ANOTHER. Obedience to one command that is built out of the ruins and breach of another, must be displeasing to God. If we do, we shall add to non-performance of some duties the vitiating of those we do observe. III. SO, ALSO, ARE WE TO LEARN THAT OFFERINGS TO GOD ARE ABOMINATION IF THEY DO NOT EXPRESS OBEDIENT LOVE. For they may represent "pride, vain-glory, or hypocrisy;" they may be a service of self that is all the more real for being hidden under the veil of Divine honour; or they may be a following of custom, or a sensuous dependence upon superstitious services for acceptance with the Lord. God's supreme demand is loving obedience: the submission of the heart, the sacrifice of the will, the offering up of self, the fasting from the self-willed indulgence of our own thoughts and intents. (R. G. B. Ryle.) *Saul rejected*:—What are the lessons with which the narrative is charged? I. THE DANGER OF MISTAKING PARTIAL FOR COMPLETE OBEDIENCE. "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." 1. God requires literal obedience. 2. God's language never exceeds God's meaning. 3. Conscience is seen most clearly in minute obedience. II. THE POSSIBILITY OF GIVING A RELIGIOUS REASON FOR AN ACT OF DISOBEDIENCE. "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." 1. One duty must not be performed on the ruins of another. It was a duty to sacrifice, but sacrifice must not be offered upon disobedience. 2. God's commandment must not be changed by men's afterthought. Lucky ideas, sudden inspirations, and the like, mean ruin, unless well tested. III. THE DANGER OF BEING SEDUCED INTO DISOBEDIENCE BY SOCIAL CLAMOUR. "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." 1. The people who tempt are not the people who can save. 2. Where God has spoken distinctly there should be no human consultation. IV. THE CERTAIN WITHDRAWMENT OF THE BEST INFLUENCES OF LIFE, AS THE RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE. "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." Parents, ministers, friends, gone! There are some incidental points of application:—1. Sin discovers itself: "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the cattle which I hear?" 2. Sin will be punished. Four hundred years elapsed before the sword fell upon Amalek (Deut. xxv. 17, 19). Time has no effect upon moral distinctions, or moral judgments. (J. Parker, D.D.) *Saul's continued disobedience*:—A course of action more certainly calculated to insult the majesty of Heaven cannot be conceived than that which Saul adopted. It is true the command was partially obeyed, but the only case in which obedience was rendered was that in which there was no temptation to gratify selfish feeling. Where, however, anything could be turned to his own personal advantage, there the command of God was recklessly trifled with. Look attentively at Saul in this matter. When Jonathan had done nothing to deserve

death, there was no mercy for him in his father's heart; and it required the downright and peremptory prohibition of all Saul's army to save the innocent son alive. But when a duty was rendered imperative by that God who is not bound to give, in any case, His reasons for action, Saul was deputed to put Agag to death, when to have done this would have been but an act of simple obedience, he ventured to disobey, and spared the man whom God had marked for destruction. It was, in Saul's view, a matter of pride to have his triumph graced by the presence of a conquered king, to make Agag feel that he owed his life to his own clemency, and that he held its prolongation on the tenure of his conqueror's will. He found a greater gratification in all this than in simple obedience to God. Samuel goes, after a night spent in grief and in prayer, to be the bearer of the tidings of God's displeasure. But what strange scene is this which breaks upon us as the messenger of the Lord reaches Gilgal? Much as we know of Saul, and accustomed as we have become to the proofs of his moral obtuseness, we are hardly prepared for the downright self-complacency, for the cool effrontery of the words which he addressed to Samuel, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." I. WE ARE REMINDED THAT A GREAT AMOUNT OF DIRECT SIN MAY BE COMMITTED, AND NEVERTHELESS DISGUISED, UNDER A LOUD PROFESSION OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD. There is, in some individuals, a forwardness in certain forms of duty which cost no self-denial at all; a forwardness, also, in the announcement of what has been done which is, in itself, to practised eyes a ground for suspicion that all is not right behind the scenes. We sometimes notice individuals overdoing the thing that is courteous and polite—"glaringly civil"—towards those who come on the errand of Christian fidelity, and whose business is with souls in prospect of the great account. There is so much joy expressed at seeing them, there is so much interest taken in their presence, there is such a sudden burst of cordiality, as that upon the very amazement excited there follows the suspicion that something is going on which there is an effort to conceal. Let us aim after such a walk and conversation as that we can be natural in our demeanour, and not artificial and forced; such a life as will bear inspection behind the scenes, and as will not compel those who watch for souls to ask, as they look around, what meaneth this or that? what meaneth this unholy gratification? what meaneth this unsubdued temper? II. THE ANSWER OF SAUL TEACHES THAT THE MEN WHO, TO GRATIFY THEIR OWN PURPOSES, WILL LEAD OTHERS WRONG AND COUNTEenance THEM IN EVIL-DOING, WILL BE THE VERY FIRST TO EXPOSE THEM WHEN THEY WANT TO EXCUSE THEMSELVES. And Saul said; "They—not I—" for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Ah! study well that sentence, "They" did it. Would that its impressiveness might be felt by the thousands who are too ready to be led by the advice, by the example, of those who ought to have but one rule for their own conduct and for their influence over others too, and that rule God's word—God's will. There are some who will lead you into evil for the sake of getting countenance to themselves in their own want of religion. How many have had to mourn at last, when they have found their advisers converted into their accusers, when they have seen their companions in guilt stand as the witnesses for their condemnation. III. THERE ARE OTHER ERRONEOUS PRINCIPLES IN THIS ANSWER OF SAUL. 1. He evidently implied that a formal act of obedience might be taken as a set-off against an act of direct disobedience. He implied that, putting one thing over against the other, God would be satisfied in the long run. If he intended to offer sacrifice at all, it was upon the principle of compromise and composition. He would have given God a part of the spoil, that he might have kept a much larger portion for himself. He would have offered a fraction, that the extensive remainder might not have rendered his conscience uneasy. In those sacrifices which you offer to God no equivalent is found for the want of obedience. Obedience, as a principle, has a value far above sacrifice, as an action; it is "better than sacrifice"—better, as the principle must be superior to the form in which it is embodied—better, as the affection which sends a gift is more valuable than the gift itself. How, then, with justice, can the one be substituted for the other? The offering and the sacrifice have a value as embodiments of the principle of obedience and love—then only are they acceptable; but as substitutes for principle they have no acceptableness. 2. Another error in Saul's answer to which Samuel addressed himself was this, that, admitting he was in fault, there was no great harm in his sin after all. The king of Israel did not, indeed, use these words, but doubtless the prophet gathered that this was his real sentiment. "For rebellion is as the

sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." Here we see a class of sins mentioned whose heinousness was undoubted. Witchcraft God had forbidden to be tolerated on any account. Iniquity is here undoubtedly put for flagrant violation of God's law; such, for instance, as the idolatry mentioned immediately after. The probability is that the king of Israel plumed and prided himself upon his public acts in reference to these very points. You have acted as though you thought witchcraft was a great crime, and so it is; but then rebellion such as that which you have manifested is as bad. Your rebellion, what has that been but putting God out of His proper place of authority, and consulting your will and your inclination instead of listening to His voice. The actual amount of our guilt must not be adjusted by the external form of the transgression in which it issues—by its classification according to outward appearance. Saul congratulated himself on being thought far superior to the consulter of those who had familiar spirits, and would have been shocked at the idea of being regarded as an idolater; but God thought him just as bad as though he were the one or the other. It is well for us to recollect that in spirit we may be bearing the very same kind of guilt before the eye of Omniscience which we are condemning in the declared conduct of others. (*J. A. Miller.*) *Saul's dethronement*:—Saul has thrown away his last chance, and Samuel mourns for him in the bitterness of his soul. Rationalistic writers, who would fain remove the miraculous out of Scripture, and explain the currents of its history by the play of human passions, have maintained, in strange inconsistency with the facts before them, that it was Samuel who compassed Saul's misfortunes. They argue that, displeased with the king for supplanting him in the rule and the affections of the people, he had secretly wrought his fall. How utterly inconsistent such a view is with the facts of Saul's history, especially how utterly inconsistent it is with the true relation of Samuel to Saul, as disclosed in the history, need hardly be stated. So we read that Samuel, when he had heard of Saul's transgression, "cried unto the Lord all night," and again in the last verse of the chapter, that "Samuel mourned for Saul." The prophet's tears and entreaties could not avert the doom that was inevitable. Saul had sinned away his last chance, and he was finally rejected. Saul, after setting up a monument, commemorative of his victory, at Carmel, had gone down to Gilgal. Samuel having learned of his movements, proceeded thither to meet him. An interview followed. "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." The refutation of Saul's falsehood is not far to seek. It comes from the sheep and the oxen, the very spoils which he has spared. The veil of his false piety is in a moment rent off, and his true position before God revealed. The fearful nature of that position flashes upon him; Saul must face the sad reality. The act of disobedience which had caused his rejection betrayed his whole character as carnal and estranged from God. We are struck here with the cowardice of his self-vindication. "They have brought them from the Amalekites;" "the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen." He himself has had no share in the sin—the transgression is the act of the army! In their obedience, however, he will claim a part, "The rest we have utterly destroyed." We blame our circumstances, we blame others, we blame God; how slow we are to blame ourselves! The first symptom of a right state of mind is when the sinner, in self-condemnation and sorrow, acknowledges his guilt as his own. Saul, so brave in the battlefield, so generous when his better nature was called into play, rolls his guilt on others. The people did it; he himself was innocent. What moral cowardice! But his reply is not more cowardly and mean than it is false. They did it, he declares, "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." Who can for a moment believe that Saul spoke what was true? The assumed motive of sacrifice was a hollow falsehood, an afterthought, as flimsy as it was false. Further, one is struck with the profane daring of Saul's reply. The spoils were spared, he says, to sacrifice unto the Lord; it is as if the mention of such a motive would so gratify the Lord as to lead Him to compound with him for his transgression. Let us mark finally the spirit of estrangement from God which breathes in Saul's reply. The people spared the spoils," he says, "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." It is not "the Lord my God," for, alas! Saul's guilt has estranged him from God. A great barrier has arisen between him and the Lord. God is no longer his, but Samuel's God. How sad the fall! (*Henry W. Bell, M.A.*) *Christian culture*:—I. NO EXCUSE, HOWEVER PLAUSIBLE, CAN EVER JUSTIFY DISOBEDIENCE TO A DIVINE COMMAND. II. GOD HELD SAUL RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS DISOBEDIENCE, AND PERSONALLY PUNISHED HIM FOR IT, though he plead that it was the act of the people.

III. SACRIFICE "INSTEAD OF OBEDIENCE" IS A LOATHING TO GOD. IV. GOD USES STRANGE MEANS, SOMETIMES, TO BETRAY GUILT. (*Homiletic Review*.) *The self-righteous*:—Solomon, in his Proverbs, writes: "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness; but a faithful man who can find?" and also, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." Solomon discovered the self-righteous in his day. Cloaks of superior piety covered hearts full of impiety. Our Saviour likewise witnessed much of outward cleanliness, but inward wickedness. Semblances of piety only—shells without the kernel. In all ages and among all nations this class is found. One of the most vivid illustrations of a self-righteous man is that presented in Saul's character. Note in what his self-righteousness consisted: 1. In partially heeding the Lord's commands. Partial service and fondness for spoils exhibit his true character. Society to-day is tinctured with like partial service and fondness for spoils. 2. In endeavours to appear good. The ready salutation was common in the East; his assertion of fidelity unasked was egotistic. Moreover it was false. 3. In excusing self and condemning others. "They did it." He shirks responsibility. He would be seen of men as the true captain, when in fact he was the real hypocrite. 4. In commanding sacrifice in justification of disobedience. He claims that the spoils were for religious purposes. What vain justification! As well may the dealer in ardent spirits argue that he does his damning work that he may build a church. Good deeds cannot atone for disobedience without repentance. If we become enamoured of our goodness, our piety is vain, and exclusion from Christ's kingdom is certain. It was the hidden rock that sent the City of Columbus, with her precious freight, into the mighty deep. The hidden defect in the car-wheel brings wreck and ruin to the train. The hidden flaw in the column or arch tells the story of disaster and death. The hidden defect of self-righteousness will bring upon us irreparable ruin. Clothe yourselves with Christ's righteousness. (*W. E. Fetcham*.) *Partial obedience a sin*:—This fragment of ancient history teaches—I. THAT PARTIAL OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDS OF GOD IS NOT SATISFACTORY TO HIM. II. THAT THE PERFORMANCE OF ONE DUTY CANNOT ATONE FOR THE NEGLECT OF ANOTHER. III. THAT THERE IS IN SIN A SAD TENDENCY TO SELF-MULTIPLICATION. History abounds in examples of this self-propagating power of evil. Men get entangled in wickedness, and then, with a view to free themselves, they plunge deeper into the labyrinth.

"I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er."—*Shakspeare*.

The beginning of evil is like the escape of water from a great canal or capacious reservoir; it is like the falling of a spark upon combustibles. No one can tell when or where its ravages will end. Will they ever totally end? Beware of such beginnings! IV. THAT OBEDIENCE TO POPULAR DEMANDS IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH OBEDIENCE TO GOD. (*W. Jones*.) *Showy profession*:—As the most florid people do not always enjoy the firmest state of health, so the most showy professors are not always the holiest and most substantial believers. (*A. Toplady*.) *And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night*.—*Samuel's grief over Saul*:—It is the distinguishing mark of God's children that they sigh and cry for the offences and affronts committed against their God. One prophet wished that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night (Jer. ix. 1). Another declared, his tears ran like rivers, because men kept not God's laws (Ps. cxix. 136). Another said, he had continual sorrow in his heart for his unconverted brethren (Rom. ix. 2). And when God would point out the grand mark by which his own were to be known, he says, "Go through the midst of the city, the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel ix. 4). When wickedness is going on in the streets, or in the secret chambers, do you shut your door about you, and cry unto the Lord all night? or do you look on with something like interest, and smile when you ought to sigh, and laugh when you ought to weep? A school-mistress was once telling me of something that a girl had done wrong; and while she was describing the fault in a very lively manner, several of the children smiled, and scarcely suppressed a laugh. She immediately turned to them with

a solemnity and concern which I can never forget, and said, "Now, girls, you have made her sin your own, those who could laugh at it could do it." The girls looked alarmed, and I hope they would not again so thoughtlessly make a mock at sin. (*Helen Plumtre.*) *Grief over a fallen brother*:—Bishop Thirlby was appointed by Queen Mary, and went as her ambassador to Rome to swear anew England's allegiance to the Pope. But when he performed the ceremony of degradation over Archbishop Cranmer, he wept with keenest sorrow as he did it. (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Ver. 14. **What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears.**—*Hypocrisy*:—1. I learn, first, from the subject that God will expose hypocrisy. A hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he is not, or to do what he does not. Saul was only a type of a class. There are a great many churches that have two or three ecclesiastical Uriah Heeps. When the fox begins to pray, look out for your chickens. A man of that kind is of immense damage to the Church of Christ. A ship may outride a hundred storms and yet a handful of worms in the planks may sink it to the bottom. The Church of God is not so much in danger of the cyclones of trouble and persecution that come upon it as of the vermin of hypocrisy that infest it. Wolves are of no danger to the fold of God unless they look like sheep. Oh! we cannot deceive God with a church certificate. If you have the grace of God, profess it. Profess no more than you have. But I want the world to know that where there is one hypocrite in the church, there are five hundred outside of it, for the reason that the field is larger. There are men in all circles that will bow before you, and who are obsequious in your presence, and talk flatteringly, but who, all the while they are in your conversation, are digging for bait and angling for imperfections. In your presence they imply that they are everything friendly, but after awhile you find that they have the fierceness of a catamount, the slyness of a snake, and the spite of a devil. God will expose such. The gun they load will burst in their own hands; the lies they tell will break their own teeth; and at the very moment they think they have been successful in deceiving you and deceiving the world, the sheep will bleat and the oxen will bellow. 2. I learn, further, from this subject how natural it is to try to put off your sins upon other people. Human nature is the same in all the ages. Adam confronted with his sin, said: "The woman tempted me, and I did eat;" and the woman charged it upon the serpent; and, if the serpent could have spoken, it would have charged it upon the devil. I suppose that Adam was just as much to blame as Eve was. You cannot throw off the responsibility of any sin upon the shoulders of other people. Here is a young man who says; "I know I am doing wrong, but I have not had any chance. I had a father who despised God, and a mother who was a disciple of godless fashion. I am not to blame for my sins—it is my bringing up." Here is a business man. He says: "I know I don't do exactly right in trade, but all the dry goods men do it, and all the hardware men do this, and I am not responsible." God will hold you responsible for what you do, and them responsible for what they do. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." 3. I learn, further, from this subject what God meant by extermination. There may be more sins in our soul than there were Amalekites. We must kill them. Woe unto us if we spare Agag. Here is a Christian who says: "I will drive out all the Amalekites of sin from my heart." Here is jealousy, down goes that Amalekite. Here is backbiting, down goes that Amalekite. And what slaughter he makes among his sins, striking right and left. What is that out yonder lifting up his head? It is Agag—it is worldliness. It is an old sin he cannot bear to strike down. It is a darling transgression he cannot afford to sacrifice. I appeal for entire consecration. Christ will not stay in the same house with Agag. You must give up Agag or give up Christ. Jesus says: "All of that heart or none." 4. I learn, further, from this subject that it is vain to try to defraud God. Here Saul thought he had cheated God out of those sheep and oxen; but he lost his crown—he lost his empire. You cannot cheat God. The Lord God came into the counting-house, and said: "I have allowed you to have all this property for ten, fifteen, or twenty years, and you have not done justice to My poor children. When the beggar called upon you, you hounded him off your steps. When My suffering children appealed to you for help, you had no mercy. I only asked for so much, or so much; but you did not give it to Me, and now I will take it all." God asks of us one-seventh of

our time in the way of Sabbath. Do you suppose we can get an hour of that time successfully away from its true object? No, no. As you go into the world, exhibit an open-hearted Christian frankness. Do not be hypocritical in anything; you are never safe if you are. In the most inopportune moment the sheep will bleat and the oxen bellow. Have no mercy on Agag. Down with your sins—down with your pride—down with your worldliness. I know you cannot achieve this work by your own arm; but Almighty grace is sufficient. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Self deception*:—Let our subject be the danger of self deception and half-heartedness in the religious life. We shall not have to do with people wholly irreligious and immoral, with those we commonly term sinners; but with a kind of semi-religious, or professedly religious people—people always hovering about the kingdom of God, but who never truly and heartily enters into it; one part of whose life seems alway to contradict and undo another. I. THE MASTER EVIL—WANT OF WHOLE-HEARTED SURRENDER AND Obedience TO THE WILL AND COMMANDMENT OF GOD. This it was which ran through, vitiated, and spoiled the whole life and course of the unhappy king, Saul. No more ill-fated, unhappy, unprofitable enigma to himself, to God, and to the world, than a man who has never more than half a mind or heart to anything. Such a man can serve neither world well and truly, for he dare not give himself up wholly to the present, and he cannot give himself up to the world to come, the kingdom of God. He knows and believes both too much and too little. This description applies to many professing Christians. They have too little gospel in them to make them blessed in the Lord; and enough perhaps to make them ashamed and miserable in the day of visitation—the still small voice only heard at intervals, but the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen generally gross and loud enough to close their ears to the music of heaven and eternity. II. HEREIN IS DISPLAYED LAMENTABLE WEAKNESS OF FAITH AND PURPOSE. There was a fatal weakness of soul and character about Saul, which showed itself at every great crisis, and at length brought his days to an end in calamity, disgrace, despair. He was not a man to be kept true to his avowed faith and principles, was too easily turned aside; he put his hand to the plough, and yet looked back; he reminds us of those in the gospels who said, "Lord, I will follow Thee, BUT." III. THE DECEIVING LOVE OF SELF, SELF INTEREST, COVETOUS DESIRES, VAIN AMBITIONS, RENDER US INSENSIBLE TO THE SOVEREIGN CLAIMS OF GOD AND TRUTH. It is so easy, while professing to give ourselves to God and His holy service, to seek and serve ourselves meanwhile, and keep in view low earthly ends—even to fight against prevalent forms of error and evil more for the sake of our own advancement and advantage than from pure loyalty to the cause of truth and righteousness. We may win the spoils of the enemy, and in so doing spare Agag the king, take the master-evil home into our own hearts and households, seek our own reputation and interest and not the glory of God. IV. WE HAVE HERE ALSO A MELANCHOLY EXAMPLE OF SPARING SINS AND EVILS THAT SHOULD BE SLAIN, SHELTERING AND HARBOURING THEM UNDER FALSE PRETENCES, BY UNWORTHY PLEAS AND EXCUSES. The mark of a true man and Christian to allow no known sin, least of all favourite, profitable, accustomed, pleasant sins. V. HOW SHORT AND EASY THE STAGE BETWEEN THIS EVIL PARTIALITY, THIS INDULGED INSINCERITY AT GIVEN POINTS, AND A BLINDING HYPOCRISY THROUGHOUT THE MAN. VI. IT IS A VAIN THING TO THROW THE BLAME ON OTHERS, TO ALLEGE PUBLIC OPINION AND CUSTOM IN SELF JUSTIFICATION AND DEFENCE, WHEN WE ARE DISOBEYING THE PLAINLY EXPRESSED WILL AND COMMANDMENTS OF GOD. We cut ourselves off, in this way, from all true kingship, not in Israel only, as Saul; but in a greater, holier, ever during kingdom, the kingdom of God. (*Watson Smith.*) *The rigour of Divine law*:—In approaching the fundamental principles suggested by the narrative, we ought to note two useful incidental points:—1. That man cannot evade Divine retribution (verse 2). 2. That kindness to the good ensures Divine compensation (verse 6). Kindness is self-rewarding. Beneficence bears an immortal fruitage. Passing from these introductory points we are brought into full contact with the lessons of the incident. We may learn:—I. THE TRANSCENDENT IMPORTANCE OF RENDERING LITERAL Obedience TO DIVINE REQUIREMENTS. The argument turns on the word literal. Learn that Divine language never exceeds Divine meaning. There is significance in every word; you cannot amputate a single syllable, without doing violence to the Divine idea. II. THE FEARFUL POSSIBILITY OF RESTING SATISFIED WITH PARTIAL Obedience. Are you satisfied because your life is right in the main? God will not be satisfied. He examines the minutest fibres of life. Verily the

best of men need be clothed in Christ's righteousness, or they will be consumed in the fire of Divine trial. III. **THE UTTER IMPOSSIBILITY OF RENDERING DISOBEDIENCE WELL-PLEASING TO GOD.** A religious reason is adduced in justification of disobedience. God said, Exterminate, but the people said, Sacrifice. God, however, rejected the offering which was presented at the expense of obedience. Learn then:—1. That Divine requirements are absolute. 2. That God will not allow one duty to be performed on the ruin of another. Let no man forsake God's temple in order that he may visit the sick. Let it stand as a vital clause in your life-creed, that God will not accept one duty at the expense of another! IV. **THE DANGER OF BEING SEDUCED INTO DISOBEDIENCE BY SOCIAL CLAMOUR.** Lessons suggested by Saul's circumstances:—1. That there is a higher law than the verdict of society. Popular opinion is fickle: moral law is immutable. 2. That there is a crisis in which social force can yield us no assistance. Saul was placed in that fearful crisis. He had obeyed the people, but now the people could be of no service to him! The people could violate Divine law, but could not avert Divine judgment! (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 20. **Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me.**—*Saul's obedience*:—We invite your attention to some features of Saul's character, as drawn out by the way in which he obeyed the Divine command. 1. First, let us notice the zeal and alacrity with which Saul proceeded to carry out the Divine will. Unlike Moses, who complained of his want of eloquence when bidden to go to Pharaoh in Jehovah's name, and plead for the deliverance of his oppressed countrymen—unlike Jonah, who positively refused to bear the dread message with which he was charged to the inhabitants of the great city of Nineveh, and fled to Tarshish, to escape an unwelcome tax—Saul displayed a commendable zeal in executing the command that was laid upon him. It is obvious that he undertook the work willingly, and executed it zealously. No victory could be more complete. The King was a prisoner. The people were slain. In the King's estimation the Divine command was fully carried out. Saul does not seem to have had the slightest misgiving as to the correctness of his own interpretation of the Divine command. He felt that he had done a great work, and that on this occasion no one could breathe a word against him. Poor deluded, self-conceited King of Israel! We are often told that history repeats itself, and it is certain that the history of Saul, King of Israel, has been often reproduced in the history of the Church of Christ. Jehu did a work for God, and he did it with alacrity. He destroyed the worshippers of Baal—nay, more than this, for it is said that he "destroyed Baal out of Israel." And yet the future of that man was a sad one. We read that he "took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin" (2 Kings. x). The Pharisees in the time of our Lord had a zeal for God. They revered the law of Moses, and paid to it a certain obedience (Matt. xxiii). And yet upon no body of men did our Divine Master so pour forth the torrent of His indignation as upon those arrogant, self-righteous, self-satisfied Pharisees. And is there not a voice of warning for us in these instances of antiquity. Men of wealth may dedicate that wealth to God. They may build a church, or a hospital, or a school. And yet that building so externally lovely may be hideous—hideous, I say, to that God "that seeth in secret." Self, and self alone, may have been its foundation-stone. It may be but a monument of human selfishness and ambition. Another man may take an interest in the missionary cause and devote his wealth to the spreading abroad of the knowledge of God. This indeed is a good object, and worthy of our best energies. But, oh! if men engage in the work from any but the highest motive—the desire of saving precious souls for whom Christ has died—if being men of narrow views they seize it as an opportunity for advancing their own religious party; if above all they allow their so-called religious zeal to deaden their instincts of common justice and even humanity; if they would fain silence all but those as narrow-minded as themselves—surely they have not caught fully the spirit of our Divine Master. 2. We have seen that Saul's obedience was marred by a spirit of boastful self-confidence. And his history is instructive, because the spirit of Saul still lives in the religious professor of the present day. Tell the respectable man as he leaves the church porch that he is a sinner, that there is iniquity in his "holy things"—sin in his prayers, sin in his praises—tell him, in the toughing language of the good Bishop

Beveridge, that his very repentance needs to be repented of, and that his tears need washing in the blood of Christ, and he indignantly repudiates the charge, and says, "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me." Self-confidence is the mark of the natural man. Self-distrust is the mark of the genuine disciple of Christ. (*C. B. Brigstocke.*)

Ver. 22. **Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.**—*Obedience and sacrifice*:—Saul's misconduct supplied the occasion for the announcement of an absolute and eternal truth. I. **THAT SACRIFICE IS ONLY CIRCUMSTANTIALLY NECESSARY, BUT OBEDIENCE IS ESSENTIALLY SO.** 1. Sacrifice is either an atonement for offence, and then, however excellent the remedy, it cannot for its own sake be as acceptable to the Creator as the healthful action which renders the remedy unnecessary. 2. It is the suffering occasioned by transgression, and then it cannot be so pleasant to a parent as the obedience which prevents the suffering. Hence as sacrifice is a remedy for moral disease, it is good, but as obedience is the pulsation of unimpaired health, it is better. II. **SACRIFICE IS A RELATIVE GOOD—OBEDIENCE IS PERSONAL, AND THEREFORE BETTER.** The idea may be thus expressed:—Sacrifice is required because of the relation of God to other beings than the offerer, but obedience is demanded by the relation of the individual to God.—III. **SACRIFICE IS TEMPORARY, OBEDIENCE ETERNAL.** When God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, sacrifice shall be no more needed on earth than in heaven. IV. **SACRIFICE IS GOOD AS A MEANS; THEREFORE, TO OBEY, BEING THE END, IS BETTER.** 1. Such sacrifices only were accepted of old, as God had commanded. Thus they were only valuable as they were related to obedience, and for its sake. 2. The great sacrifice is valuable as an atonement for man's disobedience. (1.) Because of the perfect obedience of the offerer. (2.) Because of the revelation of God it affords. (3.) Because of the cure of man's disobedience it is calculated thus to effect. (4.) Because it thus secures that which is better than sacrifice. (5.) In fine, it is only thus valuable permanently to the obedient. "Being made perfect He became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." (*William Knott.*) *Of the duty which God requireth of man*:—This text is a reproof given to one that wore a crown, teaching him, that though he was Israel's sovereign, he was God's subject. In the words we may notice the duty which God requires of men, which is obedience. What they are to obey is the voice of the Lord, whereby He manifests His will: it is His revealed will, whatever way He is pleased to notify it to them. Hence the obedience in the text is called hearkening. The excellency and eminency of this duty. God delights in it. All other things must yield to it, but it to none. 1. The duty which man owes unto God. That is obedience. We are in a state of subjection to God. He is our Superior, and His will we are to obey in all things. He is our King, and we must obey Him as His subjects. He is our Father, and we must show Him all respect, reverence, and affection as His dutiful children. He is our Lord and Master, and we must yield Him the most cheerful and unlimited service, as is our reasonable duty. He is our supreme Lawgiver, and we must receive the law at His mouth, every law and precept, every ordinance that is stamped with His authority, whatever is subscribed with a "Thus saith the Lord," readily obeying it. 2. Of whom the Lord requires this duty. No man can be free from this duty more than he can be a God to himself. 3. The rule of that obedience. It is the will of God. His will is our supreme law. Not the secret will of God; for that which God never revealed to man, cannot be his rule; but the revealed will of God (*Deut. xxix. 29*). 4. The properties of this obedience which God requires of man. (1.) It is sincere obedience to His will. Hence David says, "I was upright before Him" (*Psaln xviii. 23*). Hypocritical obedience may please men, but not God, the searcher of hearts. All obedience without uprightness or sincerity, is a mere counterfeit, an empty pretence, which will be rejected with abhorrence. (2.) It must be constant obedience. (3.) It must be tender obedience. We have to deal with a jealous God, whom whorish looks will offend (*Ezek. vi. 9*). We cannot be too nice in obedience. (4.) It must be ready obedience, like that of those of whom the Psalmist speaks, "As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me" (*Psaln xviii. 24*). God's call and command must drown the voice of carnal ease, and all arguments arising from spare thyself. (5.) It must be universal obedience (*Psaln cxix. 6*), in "having a respect unto all God's commandments." The whole of the commands of God have the same Divine stamp upon them. They are one golden chain: whoso takes away one link, breaks the chain; if the

connection be destroyed, the whole machine falls asunder. Whoso makes no conscience of any one known duty, discovers hypocrisy in the rest. (6.) It must be absolute obedience, like that of Abraham (Heb. xi. 8). (7.) It must be perfect; though now in our fallen state we cannot give any obedience that deserves that epithet. God may and does require of all men in whatsoever state, "Be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The believer, sensible of his utter incapacity to perform such an obedience to the holy law of God, renounces all his own sinful and imperfect, though sincere obedience, and betakes himself to the complete obedience of his Surety, and presents it as his own to God, which He accepts. 5. On what accounts do we owe this obedience to God. On these principally, (1.) Because He is our great and glorious Creator, to whom we owe our life and being. (2.) Because He is our chief end, the chief and last end of all being. (3.) Because He is the conserving cause of all. As He gave man a being, so He upholds and preserves him therein, by His mighty power. (4.) Because of the eminency of His nature, which founds His supreme dominion over us. (5.) Because He is our good and gracious Benefactor, from whose bountiful hand all our mercies do flow. (6.) Because He is our Governor and supreme Lawgiver. He is a Lawgiver to all, to irrational as well as rational creatures. Does God require from men obedience to His revealed will? The doing of what God does not command can be no acceptable service or obedience to God. Our duty to God is not to be measured by our imaginations, but by the revealed will of God. Nothing but what is commanded of God can lawfully be the object of our duty. Those who never heard the gospel will not be condemned for their not believing it; for the revelation of God's will must go before our actual obligation to it (Rom. ii. 12). This ought to stir up all who bear the Christian name, to be vigorous and lively in obeying God, particularly the great command of believing in the name of His Son; as considering that whosoever doth not so obey and believe the gospel, shall be damned (Mark xvi. 16). (T. Boston.) *Obedience and sacrifice compared* :—That obedience is due to God from all His intelligent creatures, I suppose none will deny. It is the original unchangeable law of creation, which every after discovery served not to undermine, but to support and confirm. It was the religion of man in the primitive state of innocence; and it shall be the religion of heaven, when we shall see our Maker as He is. The very excellence of truth itself lies in its influence on holiness, and the very purpose of every sacred institution is to form our minds to a habit of obedience, and subjection to the will of God. In the meantime, it is of the utmost moment, that we have clear and just conceptions of the nature and principles of obedience. I. I AM TO OPEN A LITTLE, AND MAKE A FEW REMARKS UPON THE HISTORY WHICH GAVE OCCASION TO THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET. 1. How easily are people misled into disobedience by their present interest, or carnal inclinations! how ready are these to mix themselves in all our actions, and to turn what was intended as an instance of obedience, into an act of impiety and transgression! 2. You may observe how natural it is for people, when challenged for any fault, to lay the blame of it upon others, even when there is little prospect of hiding their own guilt. 3. We may see it is an unusual thing for men to imagine they have been obedient to God even in that very action, by which they have in a remarkable manner shown their disobedience. True obedience is always humble, and sensible of the imperfections attending it. Ostentatious obedience, if it were for no other reason, is an abomination in the sight of God. How often does it happen that the excuses for sin are the aggravations of it? It is very remarkable, though melancholy to reflect upon, that those excuses for sin which carry in them the most daring profanity, are commonly most stupifying to the conscience. Such is the state of all those who fortify themselves in an evil practice, by embracing loose principles, who, having first given way to unbridled inclination in the breach of God's laws, steel themselves against conviction and repentance, by a denial of His truth. 5. How great is the folly of men who hope to atone for their disobedience by any compensation, but particularly by religious rites! II. I PROCEED TO SHOW IN WHAT RESPECTS IT IS THAT OBEDIENCE IS OPPOSED AND PREFERRED TO SACRIFICE, OR JUSTLY CALLED BETTER. It is not uncommon to hear this passage produced in order to prove the value of moral above positive precepts. Moral precepts, I suppose you know, are precepts of perpetual and unchangeable obligation, and positive, such as either have not, or do not seem to have, any intrinsic excellence in themselves, but depend upon the immediate and express institution of God. Now, though no doubt, if it is done with proper care, and upon

legitimate principles, a distinction may be stated between these different kinds of duties; yet it is plain, that this cannot be the spirit of the passage before us.

1. Obedience is preferred to sacrifices, as they were uncommanded, free, and voluntary. If we attend to the sacrifices under the law, we shall find them of different kinds; particularly, we shall find them distinguished in this respect, that some of them were expressly and positively ordained, and others were left to the good-will or spontaneous inclination of the offerer. The observation of the Sabbath, of circumcision, of the passover, the daily burnt-offering, the annual sacrifice on the great day of expiation, the trespass-offering, and many others, were so indispensably necessary, that no opposition was to be presumed or imagined between them and the moral law. Nay, the whole circumstances of these rites were precisely specified, and those who varied anything in the manner of their observation were to be cut off from their people. (Exodus xii. 19; xxxi. 14). I must further observe, that even with respect to voluntary or free-will offerings, though they were left at liberty whether they would offer such at all or not; yet if they did offer, the manner in which it behoved to be conducted, was appointed precisely. Now, nothing can be more plain, than that the sacrifices which Saul and his people had in view to offer, or at least pretended to have had in view, were voluntary or free-will offerings. When you remember this you will see with how great justice and force the prophet opposes sacrifices of this kind to obeying the voice of the Lord: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" As if he had said, "Can you imagine that God will be as well pleased with gifts of your own devising, as with a strict and punctual execution of the orders which Himself had given; especially when the very sacrifices you would offer to Him, are purchased by the breach of His express command?"

2. Obedience is opposed to sacrifices, as they are false and hypocritical. Even in those sacrifices that were most expressly appointed, and of the most indispensable obligation, there might be an essential defect, from the inward disposition not corresponding to the outward action. Reason, as well as scripture, teacheth us, that in all acts of worship the sincerity of the heart makes the chief ingredient. (1.) Our sacrifices may be polluted by inconsistency or unsoundness in the character. This is the case where men are careful in attending upon the institutions of religion, but do not make conscience of keeping the commandments of God in their ordinary conversation. (2.) The other kind of hypocrisy is, when men put on religion as a cloak and covering on their wickedness, and, without any inward regard or sense of duty to God, aim only at the praise of men.

3. Obedience is opposed to sacrifices, as they are dead and formal. I am not at this time to mention all the ends which an infinitely wise God intended to serve by the appointment of sacrifices: but every one must be sensible, that they could be of no avail without taking in the principle from which they were bought, and the temper and disposition of the offerer. There was no doubt very much of outward form in the Mosaic economy; and the ritual practices bore so great bulk in it, that, by way of comparison with the spirituality of the gospel, it is called the law of a carnal commandment. But it would be mistaking it very much to suppose that God was fully satisfied with or desired that His people should rest in the outward form. This is plain from many passages of scripture (Psalms v. 7; xxvi. 6; li. 16, 17). In opposition to this, however clear a dictate both of reason and scripture, it seems to have been the disease of ancient times, to imagine that the sacrifices were somehow necessary or useful to their Maker in themselves; and that He was pleased with the possession of the gift, independent of the disposition of the giver. This led both Jews and Gentiles to suppose that the more numerous and costly the victims the greater would be their influence (Micah vi. 6). This conduct, so dishonourable to God and so inconsistent with the holiness and purity of His nature, had no sufficient excuse either among Jews or Heathens. But surely it is still more criminal among Christians. The gospel, as a dispensation of clearer light and greater purity is called the ministration of the Spirit. God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

4. In the last place, obedience is opposed to sacrifices, as they are misplaced and unseasonable. In the ancient dispensation, time and place were as much ascertained as any circumstance that belonged to the temple-service; and nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of that economy, than taking any liberty with the order which God Himself had established. The same general rule is to be observed at all times. We must attend to the intimations of Providence, and, as far as they

can be clearly discerned, discharge those duties to which we are immediately called. Everything is beautiful in its place and season, and is then not only most acceptable to God, but most useful to men. It is so far from being any disparagement of sacrifices, that it is their very excellence, to be confined to their time and place. And the maxim in the text will apply with equal propriety to every duty of the moral law. The most excellent of them may be misapplied. True religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is, to visit the fatherless and the widow; and yet, if the time of Divine worship be unnecessarily chosen for that purpose, or if too much time be consumed in it by those whose presence cannot be useful, it is a rejected sacrifice. III. I PROCEED NOW TO MAKE SOME PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID. From what has been said, you may learn what are the great characters of acceptable obedience; and, I think, they may be reduced to the three following:—1. It must be an implicit obedience. 2. A second character of true obedience is, that it be self-denied and impartial, that it be not directed or qualified by our present interest. 3. A third character of obedience is, that it be universal, without any exception. From what hath been said on this subject, you may see, that the true notion of obedience is inconsistent with the notion of merit, as if we could lay our Maker under some sort of obligation. You see how Saul justified himself, and said, "Yea, but I have obeyed the voice of the Lord." But, in the judgment of God, there was no consideration had of what had been done, but a severe sentence of condemnation upon him for what he had neglected. True obedience is always considered, in this light, as a debt due to God, for the performance of which nothing can be claimed, but for the neglect of which a penalty is incurred. (*T. Witherspoon.*) *To obey is better than sacrifice.* 1. OUR OBEDIENCE MUST BE PROMPT. We begin a holy life with the question, "What wilt thou have me to do?" The moment God answers we should run to do His bidding. "Run" is the word (Psalm cxix. 32). II. IT MUST BE EXACT. When Saul said, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord," he meant it as certain loose and careless people count obedience. It is not enough, however, for us to do fairly well. When God says "Pay!" He means to the uttermost farthing; when He says "Go to Nineveh," he means Nineveh and nowhere else. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." III. IT SHOULD BE UNQUESTIONING. If ever a man was excusable for "wanting to know," it was Saul when commanded to exterminate Amalek. Was the requirement just? Was it humane? Was it politic? But that was God's affair. God must be permitted to justify Himself. There was no uncertainty as to the Voice. IV. OUR OBEDIENCE SHOULD BE CHEERFUL. We make too much of duty and obligation, and too little of the joy and privilege of service. Let us come up from the association of mercenaries and galley-slaves to the high level of filial devotion. We are sons and daughters of God; brethren of Christ. He was once "sent" upon a painful, toilsome errand; His obedience was prompt, exact, unquestioning, and joyous. "In the volume of the book it is written, 'I rejoice to do Thy will,'" Let the mind that was in Christ Jesus be also in us. (*Homiletic Review.*) *No true worship or service without an obedient heart:*—We are all apt to form a false estimate of our character, and to approve ourselves in the face of heaven, and maintain our uprightness in the presence of men, when miserably deficient in our duty, when deeply stained with the spots of guilt and rebellion. Commonly indeed it happens, as in the case before us, that the truth of the matter is made manifest to our fellow-creatures; that even they are not often, or not long, deceived in forming a judgment of our character: but however this may be, "shall not God find it out?" 1. If the Creator prescribes a method in which He will be honoured and served, it is not for the creature to substitute any other method of his own. Every religious service derives its value from its accordance with the will of God: all other services will be disowned and rejected. For instance, the Almighty has ordained, that His blessings shall be obtained by prayer: it is not for us to say, that He knows our wants already, better than we can detail them; and that therefore it is useless to pray. The value and efficacy of sacrifices resulted entirely from the appointment of God; and they could not possibly be acceptable, unless as offered in obedience to Him. Had Saul offered thousands of sheep and oxen, not of the spoils of Amalek, but from his own flocks and herds, in an impenitent and self-confident disposition, the Lord would have abhorred them all; how much more then, when the animals had been spared in direct disobedience to His positive command. But so it was, that the people were always resting on the outward form, and overlooking the thing signified;

mindful of the service, but regardless of the heart. And for a plain reason: because the service itself was easy, and satisfied the deluded conscience, and left the offender in quiet possession of the sinful habits in which he delighted: and because the submission of the heart was irksome and painful, and required a discipline, a humiliation, a change of character and of life, which the offender was little disposed to undergo. 2. Without a sincere and humble spirit of subjection, without a holy and obedient heart, all our prayers and all our services are nothing: in the sight of God; are founded in hypocrisy; are no better than a mockery of his name. Submission to the authority and will of God must ever be essential to true religion under every dispensation; and few persons there are, who doubt this as a speculative truth. But there is a vast difference between the outward submission of an unrepentant and ungodly heart, and the inward submission of the penitent and the pious! It is the subjection of mind, the surrender of the affections to the will and law of God, which constitutes an acceptable service. Pardon is graciously promised to all who truly repent, and the word of God assures us, that it will be extended to none besides: upon what ground then can the unrepentant sinner presume to ask forgiveness? And how can that man dare to implore of God the grace to repent, who has no intention and no real desire of repenting? He is but adding insult to his sin. How can the wilful sinner who lives, and is yet determined to live, in any course of guilt, really pray for deliverance from the bondage of sin? Does he expect that a miracle will be wrought to deliver him against his will? So far from resolving, he does not even wish to be changed from sin to holiness, from the world to God. In truth, it is not prayer at all; it is but the semblance and pretence of prayer. 3. Let us look well to the root and to the fruit of our sacrifices: see that they are all offered in an humble and obedient spirit, that we feel and desire what we say in the awful presence of a holy God: see that the submission of our lives is consistent with the submission of our persons before Him; that whatsoever we do, we do out of respect for His authority, out of love for His law, and obedience to His command. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *Obedience better than sacrifice*:—I think that in this verse there is first a voice to professing Christians, and then, secondly, to unconverted persons. I. WHO HAVE MADE A PROFESSION OF YOUR FAITH IN HIM. Probably, there are some of you who may be living in the neglect of some known duty. It is no new thing for Christians to know their duty, and yet to neglect it. If you are failing to keep the least of one of Christ's commands to his disciples, I pray you be disobedient no longer. It may be that some of you, though you are professed Christians, are living in the prosecution of some evil trade, and your conscience has often said, "Get out of it." You are not in the position that a Christian ought to be in; but then you hope that you will be able to make a little money, and you will retire and do a world of good with it. Ah! God cares nothing for this rams' fat of yours; he asks not for these sacrifices which you intend to make. Possibly, too, there may be some evil habit in which you are indulging, and which you excuse by the reflection, "Well, I am always at the prayer meeting; I am constantly at communion, and I give so much of my substance to the support of the Lord's work." I pray you give up that sin! To obey is better than sacrifice in the matter of caring for the sick and needy of all classes. We rejoice in the number of hospitals which adorn our cities. These are the princely trophies of the power of our holy religion. There are no nobler words in our language than those inscribed on so many walls—"Supported by voluntary contributions." We glory in them. Rome's monuments, Grecian trophies, Egypt's mighty tombs, and Assyria's huge monoliths, are dwarfed into petty exhibitions of human pride and vanity before the sublime majesty of these exhibitions of a God-given love to our fellow men; but all these homes of mercy and healing become evils to ourselves though they are blessings to the distressed, if we contribute of our wealth to their exchequer and neglect personally to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, and do not, like the Master, go about doing good. Give as God has given to you; but remember God acts as well as gives. "Go thou and do likewise." Sacrifice, but also obey. II. BUT MY MAIN BUSINESS IS WITH THE UNCONVERTED. 1. God has given to you in the gospel dispensation a command. It is a command in the obeying of which there is eternal life, and the neglect of which will be and must be your everlasting ruin. That command is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." 2. Now, this first point being clear, that God has given a command, the second remark is that the most of men, instead of

obeying God, want to bring Him sacrifice. They suppose that their own way of salvation is much better than any that the Almighty can have devised, and therefore they offer their fat of rams. This takes different forms, but it is always the same principle. One man says, "Well now, I will give up my pleasures; you shall not discover me in low company; I will give up all the things that my heart calls good, and will not that save me?" No, it will not. When you have made all this sacrifice, all I shall or can say of it is, "To obey is better than sacrifice." "Well, but suppose I begin to attend a place of worship?" Remember therefore that all that you can do in the way of outward religion is nothing but the sacrifice of the fat of rams; and "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "Yes," says another, "but suppose I punish myself a good deal for all that I have done? I will abstain from this, I will deny myself that, I will mortify myself in this passion, I will give up that evil." Friend, if thou hast any evil give it up; but when thou hast done so do not rely upon that, for this oughtest thou to have done, and not to have left the other undone. God's command is "Believe!" 3. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." And now I have to show that it is so. It is better in itself. It shows that you are more humble. It is really a more holy thing. It is a holier and a better thing to do one's duty than to make duties for one's self and then set about them. But not obeying and not hearkening to the gospel, sinner, you must perish. There is the way of salvation, and thou must trust Christ or perish; and there is nothing hard in it that thou shouldst perish if thou dost not. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Obedience*:—The fact we want to emphasise is the supremacy of obedience. There is nothing said against sacrifice for it is a service of Divine ordination from the earliest times. They are the expressions of the highest conditions of being. Best men live to sacrifice, and what is more they live by sacrifice. Sacrifices were designed to subordinate the material to the moral and to show that the gold and silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills are God's. They further indicate the fact that even a material service may have spiritual ends. But notwithstanding all that can be said for sacrifice, there is "a more excellent way." There is a higher law of life. There are other and more commendable ways by which we can attest our loyalty and prove our love, and that is by obedience. Was he not acting within his right in disposing of the spoils and prisoners of war? Did not other kings exercise this prerogative, and were not the Israelites to be like other nations in having a king? Why then should King Saul be unlike other kings? Why abate his privileges or place restrictions upon his actions? Why deprive him of his prerogatives? How like this is to man who goes forth in the pride of intellect and the boast of lordship saying in effect, "Am I not king? Are not this earth and these heavens all inferior to me? Is it not mine to subdue the earth and control and subordinate to my uses and for my comfort the forces of Nature?" "Yes, man. I admit thy supremacy. I loyally bow to thy kingship. I pay dues to thy lordship. I am at thy service as I am for thy use, but I will not be forced into a blind and unconditional servitude. You must honour me and obey my laws or I refuse to acknowledge thy authority." The commonest facts of life give evidence that man conquers by obedience and rules by submission. He cannot force Nature to do what he may list. The utmost he can do is to direct and utilise her forces. He must first learn obedience, and by obedience he commands those potent elements with which earth, air, fire and water are invested. If the mariner would take his ship across the sea he must observe the law of winds and currents. No arrangement of Nature can be changed. No law can be abrogated. Man investigates, discovers, blends, controls, adapts, subordinates and utilises, not by an imperious authority but by obedience. Things are as they are, and he must submit to them. This is true of human life. The case of a successful Scotchman is apt to our argument. Having risen to a splendid position, he was asked the secret of his rapid advancement; he gave the reply: "by bowing," or by civility, by obedience. Fancied dignity is the sure road to degradation whereas humility leads by an unerring law to exaltation. The principle of the text applies with equal force to spiritual life. It is alone by obedience to the eternal law of moral right and spiritual life that a man can be saved. Obedience to God is the prime position of man. "To obey is better than sacrifice." 1. It is an exhibition of nobler qualities. A fanatic or even a hypocrite may sacrifice but it is only the true man who obeys. Robbers and murderers have presented oblations to the gods and even to the professed servants

of the One only God, but vain all such acts in the absence of obedience to the Divine moral code. 2. Obedience is a higher service than sacrifice. A better set of forces are put in motion by obedience. Sacrifices are external, obedience is internal. Sacrifices are part of a carnal ordinance, obedience is of the essence of spirituality. The one looks earthward, the other heavenward. Sacrifices may be an accommodation to a party and jealousy for the honour of a sect, obedience is loyalty to truth. Sacrifices may have an ear for the praise of man, obedience for the glory of God. 3. Obedience is more akin to the conditions of heaven. Sacrifices can play no part in the services of the celestial temple, while obedience is the secret of heaven's harmony and peace. The true heart is more capacious than the largest hand. The body is at best but a poor instrument with which to actualise thought and holy purpose. What we must do is to bring every thought into line with God's will. We must obey Him by first giving Him our heart. (*M. Brokenshire.*) *The principle of obedience*:—I. IT IS A FALSE OBEDIENCE WHEN OBEDIENCE IS REFUSED THE MOMENT THE LAW OF GOD STANDS ALONE. IN Saul's onslaught upon Amalek, there was, up to a certain point, a perfect agreement between duty and inclination, God's service and self-interest. There was no real test of obedience until Amalek had been smitten to the last man, and that man the King. The people of Israel were eager to indulge their ancient enmity against Amalek, but were not willing to exterminate the flocks and herds. Herein lies Saul's condemnation. He forsook the path of duty the moment it went forward alone, and other things—inclination, custom, self-interest—did not point the same way. There are times when religion goes further than we are inclined to go; requires more than we are disposed to render; parts company with our inclinations, and tastes, and purposes, and habits. The test of obedience is then. We must not suppose that we are serving God when we attend religious services, perform religious duties, keep the Divine law only so long and so far as inclination, interest, custom point the same way. II. IT IS A FALSE OBEDIENCE WHICH IS REGARDED AS JUSTIFYING OR EXCUSING DISOBEDIENCE IN CERTAIN MATTERS AND IN OCCASIONAL INSTANCES. Many claim for themselves what has been justly termed a dispensing power. On the ground of their general good conduct, general attention to religious duties, general obedience to the Divine law, they hold themselves excused, or warranted in occasional departures. III. IT IS A FALSE OBEDIENCE WHEN DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD IN ANY FORM AND UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES IS REGARDED AS A TRIFLING THING. It seemed a light matter to Saul to act as he did. But we can easily see that his slight disobedience involved great principles. 1. It assailed and dishonoured the character of God. To spare Agag was to charge God with partiality, was to give to His decree an iniquitous character. 2. It degraded the whole transaction. When Israel and Saul went forth to battle they were invested with the awful dignity of executing a Divine judgment. But Saul's conduct would have made it simply a vulgar marauding expedition. 3. It involved a degradation of religion. God is regarded as One who might overlook the disobedience if only He is made a sharer in the spoil. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Obedience better than sacrifice*:—I. THE PROPHET'S ASSERTION, "To obey is better than sacrifice." The sense in which he here uses the word "better" is obvious. He means to say that it is more pleasing and agreeable to the will of God. The word sacrifice, in the text, may be understood as comprising the whole of the Jewish Ritual, or that prescribed form of ceremonial observances, consisting of offerings, purifications, and solemnities of different kinds, to which they were required strictly and circumstantially to adhere. Let us next enquire into the meaning of the term obedience, as it is here used. Obedience in general signifies compliance with the revealed will of God. But this compliance may be two-fold, either outward or inward. From this explanation, then, of the terms employed, we may now see the meaning of the prophet's assertion, when he declared that "to obey is better than sacrifice." He meant to assert that "an inward and habitual disposition of heart to fear and obey God is far more pleasing in His sight than the most correct and scrupulous attention to the positive institutions of religion, where this disposition is wanting." That such is the meaning of this passage appears more certain from the several assertions to the same effect which are scattered throughout the Scriptures. What does the Lord declare by His prophet Hosea? "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offering." Attend also to the following passage from the prophet Micah: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" II. WHAT, THEN, MAY WE CONCLUDE WERE THE PROPHET'S REASONS FOR THIS

ASSERTION? 1. That obedience of which he speaks, that inward submission of the heart to God, that habitual disposition of the soul to fear and serve Him, is the one grand requisite in religion. That man has most religion who has most piety; who in his soul most constantly realises the presence, most humbly bows to the will, most sincerely desires the favour, and most devoutly longs for the glory of God. And hence it is that the fear of God, as comprehending all these constituent parts of true piety, is so frequently used in Scripture for the whole of religion.

2. Another reason was this: The end of sacrifice itself was but to promote and secure obedience. It is true that the greater part of these institutions were of a typical nature, and had a typical meaning. This was their immediate design; but their ultimate object in all this design was to lead men to holiness and to teach them to worship God in spirit and in truth. And now let us apply it to our own case, and see how far we are concerned in the conclusions to which this discussion has led. In the first place, then, let us remember that true religion under every dispensation is the same. The internal and spiritual part of religion is the same now as it has always been. There is as great a propensity among many who are called Christians, unduly to appreciate and exalt the external and ceremonial part of religion, to the neglect and injury of the internal and spiritual part of it as there ever was among the people of Israel. I will produce some few instances in proof and illustration of this remark. Some, like Saul of old, act as if they thought that an attention to the positive institutions of religion would excuse, or even justify the disobedient and unhumiliated state of their heart. Again, there are others who act like those Pharisees of old, whom our Lord condemned for their hypocrisy and iniquity; who "paid tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." They are mere formalists in religion. Further, there are still other persons, who regard and use the positive institutions of religion with a superstitious regard. They think that the very attendance on them communicates a portion of sanctity to the soul, and secures an interest in the blessings and privileges of the Gospel. These are some of the ways in which persons unduly appreciate and exalt the external and ceremonial part of religion, to the prejudice of real spiritual Christianity. I would wish you to go from the performance of these outward duties with your affections more weaned from the world, and more set on things above; with your faith strengthened, your hope increased, your love inflamed, your desires after spiritual things enlarged, and more ardent. (*E. Cooper.*)

The supremacy of obedience:—The supremacy of obedience in religion. Nothing can justify its absence, can make up for failures in it. 1. The moral element in religion, to which obedience belongs, is in the Scriptures exalted high above the ceremonial of which sacrifice is a part. 2. Obedience is of the essence and spirit of religion, whereas sacrifice is one of its forms. Our religious forms and services draw their meaning and value from the spirit of obedience in which they are rendered. 3. Obedience is itself an end in religion, whereas sacrifice is simply the means to that end. To train His people in obedience, to set up and enthrone this great principle in their natures, God instituted the whole round of sacrifice and service in the old dispensation. 4. Obedience is continuous and eternal, whereas sacrifice is intermittent, and may cease. Apply this principle to two cases: 1. To those who are willing to serve God, but only in their own way. Religious service is a matter of personal assertion. It is far easier to indulge our own impulses and fulfil our own energy of will in methods of our own, than to work where and as God has appointed, in daily self-denial. 2. To those who imagine that they can cover moral failures by religious gifts and services, who act as though the faults of daily life could be covered by large gifts to religion, and diligent attention to its forms. God will never accept sacrifice in the place of obedience. The sacrifice of the cross draws its value and merit from the perfect obedience, the complete submission of the Incarnate Son. (*Homiletic Magazine.*)

Obedience:—One of the strongest proofs of a sound religion is to be thankful for any heights which it is possible to scale; but to be much more thankful for the continuous valley in which human duty is best discharged. In all true religions, especially in those like the one in which you and I believe, there are at times inducements to spiritual rapture and spiritual depression. Sometimes these aspects are the main ones, but, as Samuel says to the old king, "To obey is better than sacrifice; and hearkening to God than the fat of rams." All through Christ's life, however deep any man's devotion, He said it was not those who in an enthusiastic ecstatic passionate manner, say, "Lord, Lord, but those who do the will of the Father in heaven," who were acceptable. He did not mean by this to re-

buke only the hypocrite, but those whose religion consisted of rapture, enthusiasm, and estatics. There is in a religion corresponding to these homely, commonplace affairs a principle higher than prayer; deeper than feeling; more admirable than rapture—the ordinary unvarying principle of obeying. Unfortunately, a great deal of religion means far more importance to confessions of religion than it does to the great downright common sense of honest, unchanging, unchangeable religion. Too much of our religion has been experimental; too much rapture, and too much depression. Read the 119th Psalm, that great lyric of obedience, one of the greatest things that man ever wrote. Never were the two songs of faith and obedience so sweetly mixed together. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." "Teach me Thy statutes." "Order my footsteps." There is as much of poetry and the practical in that one psalm as in all other compositions. It came from the true soul of a great man. This obedience, or as we call it, duty, is independent of all feeling. Am I secure to-morrow of the emotion which I feel to-day? All things conspire with me and against me. There are times when the soul is barren, days when the old familiar passages of the poets will not stir you, days of the ordinary and commonplace, days when the common things of life seem to sink below the common, and seem offensive in their minuteness, when there seems very little in life, when good is felt to be very far off. At these times is there nothing for me to do? Yes! for here comes the great solemn cry—"obey!" Never mind whether it is plain ground or not. "To obey is better than sacrifice." If obedience springs from habit, it may not be lovable, but it is useful, and it is always good. Unconscious obedience is good, the perfectness of a man's habit shows the depth of his original teaching, though there are times when habit sets itself up at the expense of thought, still it is like capital, and not to be despised. Habit is more than effort, the ease with which a man does a thing without thinking shows well how he learnt his lesson. It is comparatively independent of thought; it may exist upon a vow; it may exist for years upon a promise. The soldier who is once enlisted is not constantly thinking of the foundations of his obedience; the dress he wears, the sign upon the banner, the name borne by him will even assist him. To do the will of God and keep His commandments—it is the height of true religion, it is the basis of true religion. The greatest enthusiasts do not throw it aside; the biggest rationalists, with all their ribaldries, are in favour of it; the Romish Church, with all its pomps, believes in the commandments. We do not say that a man cannot be obedient, and at the same time rapturous; we do not say it is not possible to have both sacrifice and obedience; we do not say that a man cannot have rapture and prayer, and keep the commandments—but "obedience is better than sacrifice." The obedient man is most unlikely to trust in himself. He who learns obedience will seldom trust in it. The most obedient man is the one who says, "I am an unprofitable servant." When men get wise they will find that obedience is not only safety, but that it has a beauty of its own. Its ready presence under all circumstances, its infusion into all things, its continuance, when faith is gone, hope is low, prayer is impossible, trust is broken, when God seems for a time out of sight, when immortality is a dream, when friends are faithless, when the heart is sad, is not that noble which is not driven by things like these? Is not that the grace of graces which stays under these circumstances? Those who know where true beauty lies love flowers. Not your big exotics of foreign bloom which have to be put in glass-houses—but the green grass of old England that knows no time, that the frost cannot kill, which bears the foot and still is there, flowering by the wayside; which resists all pressure, defies all storms, always in season, never in bloom. That is obedience; and if you do not see its beauty you will get wiser perhaps as you get older, and learn, at last, its constant, unchanging, unvarying, homely, humble, and yet truly beautiful aspect that renders it the greatest of graces, and the noblest of duties; better than sacrifice, deeper than prayer, loftier than rapture, always in season. Underlying the emotion which belongs to all creeds, possible to all peoples, obedience will never do any harm, if it does no good. If it will not save men, it will not kill them. But it will do good. "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Better to do the will of God than to be courteous, estatic, devotional, or enthusiastic. (*G. Dawson, M.A.*) *Wilfulness of Saul*:—In these words are contained a lesson which Saul had never learnt. He served God and appeared zealous in His cause, so far as the way of doing this suited his own pleasure and purposes; "all that was vile and refuse" of the goods of the Amalekites, "that he destroyed utterly;" but whenever self had to be denied, and God's will made

the rule of action instead of his own, then he rebelled. Even in the apparently religious act of worshipping God, after the severe rebuke which Samuel inflicted on him, his words are, "Honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God," his own honour seems to have been that which prompted him to worship and not sorrow for his sin. In fact, Saul never really worshipped God at all, he worshipped self, and he never learnt this great and important truth, that obedience to God is the only thing pleasing in His eyes, and that whatever a man may do from motives of selfishness, yea, though he fight God's battles and advance His religion, it is all displeasing in His sight, "who seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The subject, then, which is brought before us by the text is this, that simple obedience to God's commands is the only thing which is really pleasing in His sight. You must observe that Saul was not an open rebel. And part of the command he certainly had performed; in fact, he had performed it just so far as it required no self-denial. And so may Saul stand to us as a type of those who profess to be Christians, and act in a measure as Christians, and who nevertheless follow their own ways, just as though they were under no Christian vows at all. Let us look at one or two examples of great and holy men in Scripture, and see how the example of obedience was set by them. Remember Abraham, and how he was proved and found faithful. Moses was ordered by God to go and appear in His name before Pharaoh, and though it was a dangerous mission, and he felt himself unfitted for the work, yet he obeyed. The holy Apostles also were simply called by Christ, and commanded to follow Him, and they obeyed. But why should I quote other examples, when we have that of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom we read that He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." You may observe also that Abraham and Moses, whom I have quoted as two eminent examples of obedience, are two of those whom the Apostle has mentioned in his catalogue of men of faith. In fact, faith and obedience are necessary parts of each other; there can be no obedience without faith, and faith without obedience is dead. And it is easy to see that Saul was a man without faith. The duty of obedience is put in a very high place by the text, when it tells us that obedience is better than sacrifice. You will observe that Saul made God's service the excuse for breaking His commands: to make offerings to God was no more than it was his duty to do, but then it was not to be done at the expense of a still higher duty: no sacrifice, however costly, could possibly make amends for breaking God's law in one single point. And has not this been so from the beginning? When Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden they were not placed there without a law: the command given them was simple indeed, but still it was a command, by keeping of which only they could stand; had Adam offered never so many sacrifices, and called never so much on the name of the Lord, yet if he eat of the forbidden tree he was guilty. In speaking of obedience to God's laws I have not, of course, so much in view the great moral laws. No one would fancy that he might murder or steal; but obedience to God is something much more than this. It is not an occasional act of obedience which we are called upon to do, it is a constant battle against ourselves, and against the evil nature within us, and a constant striving to root out all desires and thoughts which are contrary to the will of God. Perhaps I am presenting here the sterner face of religion; nevertheless, though it be not so pleasant to think of what we owe to God, as to speak of what He has done for us, yet it is for our good to keep in mind the vows and obligations which are upon us, and to remember that our Christian profession does mean something, and that to be a soldier of Christ is not merely a matter of words, but something very real and substantive indeed. (*H. Goodwin, M.A.*) *Obedience better than sacrifice*:—Great and glorious is sacrifice; final and abiding its effects. On that sacrifice all access to God depends. By faith in that sacrifice does every sinner in every age approach God. What can we conceive greater, better, more honoured, more glorious? God has given it us to trust to: He has given it us also to imitate. Let sacrifice be our rule of life: sacrifice for God and for man; sacrifice for love: to spend and to be spent, as He spent and was spent, who was our Sacrifice. Let our whole life be a sacrifice; rendered up to Him with whose precious blood we are bought. Too much we cannot think of, trust to, realise in our hearts and lives, that his sacrifice. And yet when we have meditated on it all we can, when we have cast ourselves in humble trust on its efficacy, when we have magnified it in our esteem, and striven to live it out in our lives—even then there is one thing

better, one thing greater, one thing more glorious—one thing before which even the lustre of the Redeemer's sacrifice pales: before which all other sacrifice is worthless and not to be mentioned. And that more glorious thing is—**Obedience**. The Lord's sacrifice was but part of His obedience. "Being found in fashion as a man," from whom obedience was due, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Listen to his own prophetic words: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not: then said I, lo I come, to do Thy will, O God." That is, "sacrifice and offering do not fulfil, do not exhaust Thy holy will: it is not suffering, it is not expenditure of blood, but it is the calm and willing submission to Thee, the ruling life after thy way, the direction of thought, word, and deed, body, soul, and spirit, affection and energies, in the line of thy blessed will—this it is which includes sacrifice—this which, more than that sacrifice, because of wider extent, and fuller capacity, pleases and glorifies Thee." And this the Redeemer came to do, and amply fulfilled. It is to obedience that Bethlehem owes all its carols, Genesareth all its miracles, Calvary all its glories, Olivet all its triumph. His miracles, His teachings, His lovings: none of these reaches over the length and breadth and depth and height of His glorification of the Father: but His obedience does: in this one word all is compromised: His death, as its noblest example. His obedience was greater than His death, for it included it: more glorious than his death, for it gave it all its virtue for propitiation, and all its power to save sinners. His death is past and gone by. "He dieth no more." But His obedience abides for ever. "And when all things shall have been put under Him, then shall the Son Himself also be made subject to Him who puts all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Truly, then, His obedience is His one character, His glory of glories. Let us come down now from the propitiation of the Redeemer as part of His perfect obedience, to our own little circle of duties, appointed for us as His were for Him. "To obey is better than sacrifice," is in some little danger of being forgotten among us, or at all events not remembered as it should be. And I will tell you in what particular way. Religion, among us, has taken a certain fixed place and standing: has been worked, so to speak, into the fabric of society. Its words and phrases, and certain conventional duties corresponding to them, have gained the freedom of the world's citizenship, and are no longer the peculiar badge which they once were. Certain points of religious morality are made much of, and properly, by all who would be thought religious, even in the ordinary respectable sense of the word. We live, there can be no doubt of it, in days of great religious stir; in days of great sacrifice, and likewise of great opportunity of appearance of sacrifice at very little cost: in days when, only to give you one instance of that which I mean, a rich man, sitting in his library, may without ever putting forth a hand to actual charitable work, pour by a few strokes of his pen his thousands along the various channels of public and private beneficence. And there is some danger, there is much danger, lest we should mistake all this sacrifice at so cheap a rate, all this doing good made easy, for the patient faith, the lowly obedience, the blessed and blessing beneficence of the Christian life. Is there not, then, here, while sacrifice is enjoined, truth in doctrine rigorously maintained, party opinion and party limits inflexibly observed, and yet the very plainest rules of Christian conduct and Christian self-denial publicly violated—is there not and must there not be a forgetting of obedience in comparison of sacrifice? When those who would not for any earthly consideration overstep some prescribed line of observance, are for pleasure and the display of person almost daily overstepping the sobriety of the Christian life and the fair limits of Christian example, surely we may say that we are losing obedience in our care for sacrifice. All the sacrifice for which we are called on, should be part of, should spring out of, our personal life with God. Our profession should revolve round our practice, not our practice round our profession. Our obedience should not be confined to things convenient and times convenient, but being the fruit of love shed abroad in our hearts, should extend over all things and all times. (*H. Alford, B.D.*) *Obedience better than sacrifice*:—I. **THAT IN WHICH GOD DELIGHTS**. 1. Obedience. Obedience to God becomes the best educator of man's moral faculties. And obedience will prompt and rightly estimate material sacrifice. 2. In such material sacrifice as is the pure and simple correspondence of an obedient heart. Material bulk is not necessarily moral wealth. Material things are hardly wealth at all in this relation. Truth has no mechanical measurement. Love is worthier than the fat of rams. 3. All true sacrifice, then, is moral in its essence and beginning. The spirit of obedience will prompt the acceptable deed. II.

SAUL'S FATAL DISREGARD OF GOD'S COMMAND. Note several particulars:—He did not seriously realise the circumstances of the case. He forgot who Amalek was, and what he had done in the past to Israel. The prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 20) had doubtless never really impressed him. The success of the sword had made him forget the word. 1. A man in such a state of wilful inattention is most liable to disobey. From scant attention will spring moral obliqueness. He has hardly reflected what obedience demands. He is filled more with the spirit of selfish conceit than an anxious endeavour to do God's will. 2. Disobedience is loss of God's favour. "Ill-gotten gains breed weary pains, and one wrong act a life-long fact. The wrong step of a king will ruin bring." III. **SAMUEL'S IMPASSIONED REBUKE.** This rebuke was thus atfame for several reasons. 1. Because specific direction had been given, and reasons for the attack. 2. Because from the first Samuel himself had ever desired to listen unto God; but Saul was not seriously attentive. 3. Because of the flagrant disobedience of Saul. 4. Because of Saul's untruthfulness. 5. Because of his feeble attempt to evade both the questioning of Samuel and the inevitable issue which he knew must ensue. Obedience is honour; disobedience disgrace. And obedience is the devotion of the heart, without which material sacrifices, however costly, are worthless. (*Homiletic Magazine*.) *The commands of God to be obeyed:*—Consider some of the lessons of instruction which we may derive from the narrative. 1. Learn, first, that whenever God's commands are plain we are not to question or alter them so as to suit our inclinations, but implicitly to obey them. Have we no Sauls among God's professing people at this day—persons who perform some duties, and neglect others equally imperative upon them? Is our obedience thus partial? Are there some sins in which we live continually, some duties which we constantly neglect? Think not that the discharge of one duty will be any excuse for the neglect of another; nay, rather be assured that this itself proves your heart not to be right with God. 2. Learn from this subject that if we would have our sins forgiven, we must be deeply sensible of the evil of them, and confess them heartily unto God. Such was far from being the case with Saul. Hear him represent his own cause, and you can scarcely find any thing wrong, even in those transactions in which you are sure there must be great blame. 3. Learn, again, from the narrative to be solicitous for the honour that cometh from God, and not for that of men. We see that Saul, when convicted by Samuel of having so imperfectly executed the commission God had given him, is far more anxious that he should pay him respect before the elders and the people than that he should pray to God for him that his sin might be pardoned. And such is the case with formalists in general: they are anxiously sensitive to the opinion of their fellow creatures; comparatively careless about the estimation in which they may be held by the great Ruler of heaven and earth. 4. Learn, lastly, from this account, that, though Almighty God bear with much long-suffering the conduct of sinners, He will at length execute righteous judgment; and that he forgets neither the injuries nor the benefits done to his people. The Amalekites had unjustly opposed Israel on their departure out of Egypt: their descendants imitated the conduct of their fathers, and now God determined their destruction. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thess. i. 6-10). (*J. Grantham*.) *The true spirit of worship:*—Obedience to the will of God is the essence of all worship. Divine worship is not left to the unaided reason of man. It is an institution and appointment of God. 1. Worship is unacceptable when the form is used for the spirit. How much of this spiritless worship pollutes our sanctuaries! How much of empty form is in our professed devotion! Is it a prayer? "It is all title-page without contents." Is it praise? Is it only music without the heart? A soulless instrument would be as expressive. 2. Worship is unacceptable when the right form is accompanied with a wrong life. Saul intended to perform a great religious service to the Lord with the gains of his successful warfare. If the worshipper is living in wilful transgression of God's Word, his exercises of devotion are no service of God. 3. The disobedience of the heart is the only acceptable worship. "To obey is better than sacrifice." The heart must act in accordance with the Divine will. The motive must be right. "God," says an old divine, "weighs not the affections of His people to Him by their actions, so much as their actions by their affections." When Abraham offered up his son it was the submission of his soul to the word from heaven that pleased God. Every part of Divine worship must be in accordance with the will of God. He has re-

vealed His word as our directory. The test of worship is the Scripture. Whatever rites are inconsistent with that word are to be repudiated. The voice of the Lord hath spoken, and it sanctions no sacrifice now since Christ became our propitiation. The voice of the Lord has spoken, and it commands that nothing be added to the revelation of God. (*R. Steel.*) *Sacrifice interpreted*:—We need to have the laws of God presented to us in severality, but also in their essence and sum. This old Hebrew judge soars above the confusion and superstition of his age, and anticipates some of the loftiest disclosures of revelation. Spiritual discernment—the instinct of the Divine in us—anticipates and interprets experience. How simple and direct religious duty appears when so presented! But “flesh and blood” did not reveal this truth to Samuel. I. OBEEDIENCE TO GOD IS THE TRUTH OF SACRIFICE. The ceremonial law was not to be divorced from the moral: they were mutually explicative and helpful. This is “reasonable service.”

1. The principle common to both. This was found in surrender to God. The sacrifice was an acknowledgment that all that a man has is God's; and as representing this “all,” of which it was but a small part, it was a valid and acceptable offering, analogous to a “peppercorn rent,” or the fanciful services exacted of crown-landlords, sinecurists, etc., in feudal times. 2. Consequent identifications (verse 23). There is nothing corresponding to “as” in the Hebrew. It is a simple, bold equation: “For the sin of witchcraft is rebellion, and idols and teraphim is stubbornness.” A great gain in such analogies; the outward ritual is shown to be accompanied by a spiritual attitude, of which it is the outcome; and as such it ceases to be trifling. The lustful man is a worshipper of “nothing,” i.e., idols, as the term used in the Hebrew implies; the disobedient is an idolater of self. A similar gain to science was realised when the “correlation of physical forces” was discovered, and men spoke of “heat as a mode of motion,” etc. 3. The spiritual expression of this principle is superior to the ceremonial. Besides being constant and self-evident, it is more immediately associated with our life. As involving will in its offering, it involves that which is most essential to our personality. The will has been called “the inner man.” It more directly and consciously contains in it our self-hood. Yet both are imperfect. The spiritual worshipper is conscious that his obedience is not complete; that he himself is incapable of the sacrifice of which he nevertheless can conceive. So his gaze is drawn to Calvary and concentrated there. In Christ the ideal of sacrifice, and yet not more than that which God requires, is presented. By appropriating that, identifying ourselves with it, we realise “the obedience of faith.” II. OBEEDIENCE TO GOD IS THE SOURCE OF REAL AUTHORITY OVER MEN. “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath rejected thee from being king.” All true kingship and efficient government is rooted in God. The ruler who ignores or defies the principles of morality signs his own death-warrant. The secret of the “unstable equilibrium” of the governments of the world lies in their failure to recognise this. The true leaders of men are those who in the first instance obey conscience. A moral principle is in the end mightier than a parliament. Writers, public leaders, etc., would do well to lay to heart the fate of Saul. Had he denied “self,” he would have kept his throne. (*St. John A. Frere, M.A.*) *Obedience better than sacrifice.* Saul's conduct is a type of human nature in manifesting—1. A disinclination to render a full and complete obedience to God's expressed will. 2. A proneness to render that to God which He does not require, and withholding that which He demands. 3. In the excuses he makes for his disobedience. The paramount importance of obedience will appear from the following remarks:—I. ALL THINGS ARE CONSIDERED BY THE ALMIGHTY AS SUBORDINATE TO HIS LAW. II. EVERY INFRINGEMENT OF LAW ENTAILS PUNISHMENT. 1. Punishment will certainly follow sin, as pain and suffering follow an infringement of the material laws of the universe. 2. The protracting of the punishment is no proof of its abandonment. 3. The final punishment of the disobedient will be eternal in its effect. Saul's posterity lost the throne of Israel for ever. III. IN ORDER TO ATONE FOR THE GUILT OF MEN WHO HAVE INFRINGED THE LAW OF GOD, THE GREATEST SACRIFICE HAS BEEN OFFERED. All the sacrifices under the old dispensation were to illustrate and honour law. Christ appeared in our nature to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (*T. D. Jones.*)

Ver. 23. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.—*Rebellion against God as malignant as witchcraft*:—To rebel against the clearest light and most express declaration of the will of God: this is an action of the like malignity, even as the

sin of witchcraft. When a crime is said to be "as the sin of witchcraft," the meaning is that it is a fault of so heinous and provoking a nature that the obstinate commission of it is altogether inconsistent with all true principles of religion, and, in effect, a total renunciation of them. The word "iniquity," in the latter part of the text, is iniquity towards God, the forsaking His worship, the denying Him His true honour, the turning from Him to false gods, or joining them with Him; and therefore it is expressed by two words together, iniquity and idolatry. Which two words in this place do not signify two distinct things, but are of the same import as if it had been said in one, the iniquity of idolatry, the perverseness or unrighteousness of serving false gods. This their disobedience in any one known instance of immorality, this their rebellion, is as the sin of witchcraft; and their stubbornness is as the iniquity of idolatry. Their refusing to obey the true God, whom they profess to worship, is like serving a false one. For wherein consists the iniquity of idolatry, and the wickedness of serving false gods; but in this, that it derogates from the majesty of the true God, and denies Him that honour which is His alone peculiar due? Not that there are not degrees of disobedience in rebelling against God; but that a wilful stubbornness in any particular disobedience is absolutely inconsistent with the favour of God; and that there may be a perverseness in persisting habitually in single sins, even like to the perverseness of a total apostacy. One mortal wound destroys a man, as certainly as many; and incorrigible obstinacy in the practice of any sin, may be of equal malignity even as idolatry itself. Equal not perhaps as to the degree of the particular punishment it shall bring upon him; but equal as to the certainty of its bringing him in general to condemnation. God requires that men should serve Him with their whole heart. But the folly of wicked men will distinguish where there is no distinction; and they will serve God in what manner only, and in what instances they please. This is that great deceitfulness of sin. The external, the formal and ceremonial part of religion, they will possibly be very fond of, but the inward and real virtues of the mind, meekness and purity, humility and charity, equity, simplicity and true holiness, for these they would gladly commute, and make amends with any compensation. This is the great and general corruption; this has in all times and in all places been the first and the last error in matters of religion. Saul would needs sacrifice unto the Lord his God, out of those very spoils, which he had presumptuously taken, against God's express command. In following ages the whole nation of the Jews would in like manner be always very diligent, in offering their sacrifices and oblations, as if that would make amends for the viciousness of their lives. And yet how often did the scriptures admonish them to the contrary (Ps. l. 13; Eccles. v. 1; Is. i. 11, 16; Hos. vi. 6). Even in our Saviour's time, after all these repeated admonitions, the Pharisees still continued to value themselves upon their mere external performances; and yet that very Scribe who was sent to tempt him, could not but acknowledge to our Lord that He had said the truth in affirming that for a man to love God with all his heart, and . . . his neighbour as himself; was more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices (St. Mark. xii. 33). They would with great superstition wash the outside of their cups and pots, while the inside of their own hearts was full of unrighteousness and all uncleanness. In a word, they would do anything rather than what was right and ought to be done; and therefore our Saviour declares, that except our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Among the several corrupters of Christianity likewise, what is it that men have not been willing to undertake, what journeys and pilgrimages, what hardships and abstinences, what voluntary humilities and uncommanded austerities, what profuse gifts to monasteries or religious societies, and unbounded zeal for propagating what they call right opinions, that is, such as happen to prevail, or be in fashion amongst them; instead of serving God with simplicity of devotion and loving their neighbours as themselves? If a man runs in a race, yet if he takes a shorter way to the mark, and runs not in that course which is by the rules appointed and marked out, his labour is in vain; and if a man professes to serve God, yet if he serves Him not in that method of obedience which God Himself requires, but will go a nearer way to heaven, either according to his own humour and fancy, or in the way of any human invention whatsoever, instead of the plain rules of reason and scripture, he may justly fall short of his reward. But no description of the perverseness of this sort of sinning can set it forth in so lively a manner as the giving some historical examples of it. And I

shall mention two, which contain a more exact representation of the nature of this stubbornness than any explication of it in words could do. The one is the behaviour of Saul, in the other actions of his life, besides that referred to in the text; the other is the behaviour of the Jews, in their passage through the wilderness towards the promised land. When God commanded them to return back into the wilderness, then on the contrary they would go up into the land which the Lord had promised them, and would fight for it presumptuously, and were defeated. In these instances their rebellious disposition was as the sin of witchcraft, and their stubbornness like to the iniquity of idolatry. (*S. Clark, D.D.*)

Discord and Harmony:—Among the moral difficulties of the Old Testament is the apparent disproportion between particular acts of sin and the temporal punishment with which God visited them. Even when we have considered the points on which Dr. Mozley insists in his masterly lectures upon "Ruling Ideas in Early Ages": when we have recognised how God accommodated, as it were His will to the possible or current conceptions of men's minds, that out of each stage in the education of our race He might elicit the very best character that it could produce: even when we have made allowance for the need of teaching rough people by rough means, and of driving plain truths into the heart of a rude and obdurate age by strong and sudden judgments:—still it may be strange to us that the most awful weapons in all the armoury of wrath should be sometimes brought out against offences which at first seem little more than faults of taste or policy or a passing temper: faults such as even good men might commit in a moment of carelessness or irritation, or on what we should call their unlucky days. How could it be equitable in a life thus rude and wild, a life where only the broadest distinctions were as yet apparent, and where the subtler lines of moral definition had not yet been traced, to doom with so terrible a sentence the hasty word of an angry woman or of a soldier flushed with peril and victory? Surely a part of the answer to such questions is found when we reflect how infinitely different may be in different lives the moral significance of the very same act. It is not only that the real quality of every action depends upon its motive: there is often a further and a deeper meaning to be read in the inner history of that character out of which, perhaps, the motive itself has come. That which on the surface seems too trivial to be heeded, may be the only outward evidence of a change which has been going on in us for years; there perhaps alone may be revealed the drift and volume of the stream which from some far-off spring has been flowing for many a mile beneath the ground: and the silent, secret course of half a lifetime may be betrayed beyond recall in that one glimpse. There are trivial acts which may disclose the bygone stages of our moral history, just as some trick of gesture or pronunciation lets out the secret of a man's parentage or nationality, or as some faint and useless trait connects a species with the ancestry of its evolution. Some such critical significance in Saul's neglect of the Divine command seems to be suggested in the strange comparison by which Samuel illustrates it: "Rebellion," he says, "is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." The likeness is not, on the surface, clear; there seems no near or necessary connection between disobedience and superstition: but perhaps their link of kindred may appear if we look more closely into the meaning and history of the act which had provoked the sentence. We shall I think find it to have been the outcome and revelation of a deep disorder such as always tends to bewilder or distort the religious impulses of the soul. The spirit then which came to Saul on that great day of his anointing was the prophetic spirit of insight into the true drift and order of the world: he was admitted to the counsels of the Almighty, and recognised the Divinity that shapes our ends. Thus was he prepared to reign: thus did he see the truth of history in all its lines stretched out and ordered in the sight of God: thus did he learn the law whose conscious service was to be his sovereignty. What might not Saul have been, where might he not have placed his name among the beloved and blessed of God and men, if only he had enthroned the revelation of that day for undivided empire in his heart: if only, like another Saul, he could have looked back to the day of his conversion and declared that he had not been disobedient unto the heavenly vision: if only like him he had thenceforward striven "to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ?" For is not this the secret of all his failure and misery, his madness and his superstition, is not this the deep significance of his sin—that while he saw the Light he would not live by it? he knew the Law and would not work by it: he heard the Counsel of God and held his will

apart from it. "He was," says Dean Stanley, "half-converted, half-aroused; his mind moved unequally and disproportionately in its new sphere": until "the zeal of a partial conversion degenerated into a fanciful and gloomy superstition." All through his life there went the maddening elements of discord: day after day the higher and the lower fought within him for the throne of his irresolute, distracted heart: day after day he woke to hear two voices clashing and disputing for his guidance: and now he followed one and now the other: yet when he chose the better he still looked wistfully at the lower life, and when he chose the worse he trembled at the thought of God. He could neither say, with the frank self-degradation of the heathen satirist, "I see the better and approve it: I pursue the worse"; nor yet with the man after God's own heart, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in Thy truth: O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name." And so he lived in discord, and he reigned by anarchy: restless and aimless, suspicious and dissatisfied, halting between light and darkness, and beset in that twilight by weird unhealthy thoughts like the evil dreams that make it bliss to wake, ever falling away from that which he saw and owned as God-like. There is surely a deep meaning in the submission with which such a life as his welcomes the influence of music. The moral discord, the distraction and disorder of his will spread at times over all the powers of the mind: and the strain and irritation of that restless conflict broke out in gusts of terror and frenzy. "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Even through his misery there came the great and constant prophecy of music: above the discord of his soul he heard those merciful echoes of a higher harmony; he knew that somewhere outside all the chaos of his broken life, there were steadfast principles of melody, and calm and measured ways, and the eternal rhythm of an undisturbed song: he felt once more that the Most High is He Who sweetly and mightily ordereth all things, and there is peace for those who love His law. For "there is a rest which remaineth for the people of God." That great prophecy of music is among us still: still "the true harmony of tuneful sounds" helps men to be patient through distress and conflict, and to hope that their steps may yet be led into the sure ways of peace. In the recess of a wall in the Catacomb of St. Calixtus there is a painting of Orpheus: in his left hand he holds a lyre: the right is raised as though to mark the rhythm of his song: and round him are the wild beasts, tamed and hushed to listen while he plays. There is no doubt that the picture represents our Blessed Lord. Though the artist as he painted it was surrounded by the bodies of those who for Jesus' sake had borne the cruelty of persecution even unto death: though he himself, it may be, had left all to follow Christ and to be a partaker of His sufferings: still he knew Him as the Master of all Harmony, the Prince of Peace: still he felt that only since he took the Crucified to be his Lord had all the wild discord and conflict of his soul passed into mysterious and most blessed confidence of union with an eternal law of Melody. And we, if out of the confusion and bewilderment of our days, from the weakness and hesitation of our faith, we look back with a bitter sense of severance and strangeness to the simple and unhindered self-surrender of those saints of old: still let us hold fast by this—which is indeed a truth that all may test and prove:—that in proportion as the perfect obedience of the life of Christ comes through humility and prayer and thought to be the constant aim of all our efforts: we shall with growing hope and with a wonder that is ever lost in gratitude know that even our lives are not without the earnest of their rest in an eternal harmony. (*F. Paget.*) **Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.**—*Saul rejected*:—We walk through the streets and see a fellow-creature who had great abilities; who was once held in great esteem; for whom a brilliant future was predicted. We see such an one presenting that combination of indescribable symptoms which we expressively sum up in the one word "reduced." And the contemplation of such a wreck is singularly depressing; the disposition of him who could witness it without sorrow in his greatest enemy is by no means to be envied. Saul was such a man. His history is indeed melancholy. It is perplexing, also. Many persons, I dare say, think Saul was, on the whole, hardly treated. I can easily imagine one taking for granted that he was bad because he is told so, and because God rejected him; but saying to himself that he does not quite see that he was so bad—that he should never have expected to find him so severely

punished—that it is strange that David escaped on so much easier terms. "What sin did Saul ever commit so heinous as the sin of David?" I. THIS PERPLEXITY, AND WRONG ESTIMATE OF SAUL'S CHARACTER, ARISES FROM VARIOUS CAUSES: PRINCIPALLY FROM OUR FALSE VIEWS ABOUT SIN AND OBEDIENCE. It happens that we live in a state of society where many acts are at once offences against society, and also sins against God. Influenced as we naturally are by what is seen, we come, in time, to view as sins only those which are transgressions of the laws of society, and to think little or nothing about those of which society takes no note. So, too, about obedience. We think that it is like work given to a servant. The more he does of it, the better servant he is. What his feelings may be about his master make little difference, provided he gets through his work. What he does is the only way in which we judge of him, as a good or bad servant. Accordingly, we suppose God judges of us, His servants, by the amount of our obedience. He issues a command, and, we suppose, the man who obeys much of it must be better than the man who obeys very little. This is not true. We may have gone with God's command, just so far as that command coincided with our own inclination, and stopped short where the real and trying exercise of an obedient spirit came in, where alone it was needed. II. GUARDING, THEN, AGAINST THESE COMMON AND ERRONEOUS VIEWS ABOUT SIN AND OBEDIENCE, LET US COME TO SOME OF SAUL'S ACTS. His falling away began from the circumstance recorded in the thirteenth chapter and first verse. Samuel came and rebuked him. This seems hard, especially when we consider the trying circumstances in which Saul was placed at the time: powerful enemies near at hand—many of his people fallen away—the rest following him, trembling—Samuel not coming—and, after all, as people would say now, "It was only a matter of form. What difference could it make, who offered the sacrifice?" "He showed a spirit above ritual observances—above ceremony and order." He certainly did. So did Naaman: and both were made to see the folly of their presumption. Some anxiety would have been natural in any man. But Saul was more than anxious. A distinct commandment of God forbade him to offer sacrifice, and yet he did it to secure an end which he thought to be desirable towards the overthrow of the Philistines. He forgot that the most trifling matter, when once it became the subject of a Divine command, ceased to be insignificant; if for no other reason, at least for this, that its observance thereby became a test—not of regard to form, but—of obedience to God. Now what disposition was manifested by this conduct? Was it not an utter absence of that "faith, without which it is impossible to please God"? What would be its effect upon the people, when the excitement was over? What, but to encourage them in their departure from the ordinances of Him from Whom they longed to stray, and be as the heathen? III. THE ALMIGHTY, THEN, DID NOT REJECT THIS HIS FIRST CHOSEN KING OF ISRAEL FOR ANY SLIGHT FAULT OR ANY MOMENTARY SWERVING FROM THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE THROUGH IGNORANCE OR FROM IMPULSE; BUT FOR HABITUALLY AND PERSEVERINGLY GOING WRONG IN THAT VERY RESPECT WHICH WAS OF MOST CONSEQUENCE IN THE DUE EXECUTION OF HIS OFFICE. He had to meet the difficult question which met the Apostles, "whether he should obey God rather than man." They had no hesitation in arriving at a decision: neither had he: but they decided it differently. If ever there was a time in which Saul would have been appreciated, ours is that time. Were he alive now he would be just the man that would rise in the world—probably get into Parliament, lead a party, perhaps become Prime Minister. He was the man for the people. A striking man; able, energetic, fitted to command; above all, prepared to obey the Lord just so far as, by suiting the people's views, he should help to his own exaltation. The popular religion or phase of any particular religion would be his. All creeds just as far Divine as they were popular. None more the truth than another. Saul's day fell in an evil era, and, for him, under an evil dispensation. In his time the tares and the wheat did not "grow together till the harvest." The tares were rooted out at the time, and so people who came could be shown what were pronounced tares by the Lord of the Harvest, and what was their end. This is one very important advantage we derive from the system of temporal rewards and punishments and the special Providence under which the Jews lived. By these means we can arrive at the principle on which His future "judgment according to works" will be conducted. Thus, a line of conduct in which we should have detected nothing very striking, either of good or of evil, when marked with God's disapproval, arrests our attention, leads us to examination, and acts as a corrective to the

erroneous judgment on human conduct which the time or the society in which we live had led us to form in our minds. Many would think that Saul had succeeded. Our Lord tells us that this is impossible. The compromise, He says, cannot be effected. God's rejection of Saul shows us that he did not succeed. The characters condemned and approved in the Old Testament are marked by the very same characteristics, after all, as those which are condemned and approved in the New. Double-mindedness, want of faith, loving this present world, loving the praise of men more than the praise of God, seeking to be friends with it, making that our great aim, and the friendship of Him Who redeemed us secondary to that: a determination to do our own will; a hesitation and insincerity in saying, come what may, "Thy will be done"; these are ever the marks of those who are held up as sad examples of inconsistency, to be deplored and to be avoided. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) *Saul's deserved and irrevocable doom*:—Before Samuel turned after Saul he delivered his conscience, and pronounced the irrevocable doom against him. That doom was deserved, and it was irrevocable. 1. It was deserved. Saul was forewarned. He had received a plain commission from God. He occupied a high position. He belonged to a nation that had the light of Divine revelation. He was their king, and had pledged himself to keep the constitution, which demanded obedience to the will of God. He was the first king, and according to his conduct was the monarchy on the one hand, and the subject people on the other, likely to be influenced. Obedience in his case had been concentrated on important points; but in these he had transgressed. It therefore repented the Lord that he had made Saul king. But his purpose of a right theocracy under a man after his own heart was not to fail: "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent." 2. It was irrevocable. God had solemnly declared that he would turn the kingdom from Saul. He had never said that Saul would be kept in the kingdom and found a dynasty in Israel. He was not bound to continue him in the office. He had raised him to the throne that he might have a fair trial, and full opportunity of acting aright. Saul was endowed by God with every advantage, with kingly qualities, surrounded with a band of men whose hearts God had touched, appointed to special commissions, and hedged up by every means likely to aid his fidelity. But God might change the sovereignty. When, therefore, he beheld Saul's conduct, He is said to have repented that He had made him king. Here we find a principle which can bear a most extensive application. God's dealings with us are still wrought on the same plan. He has not given His word regarding our circumstances here. He has not pledged Himself to continue them as they have been. He may change these. He acts towards us as a judicious teacher, and shapes His course according to our conduct. There are reasons in our manner of action, proceeding from our abuse of mercies, which may necessitate a change. He may alter our worldly position, and send adversity instead of prosperity. He may lay a restraint upon our ambition, and make us feel by sad experience the vanity of human wishes. He may afflict our households, or prostrate ourselves. In this respect much depends upon the individual with regard to the providence of life. It was Saul's disobedience that warranted the chastisement which he received, and the change in God's mode of dealing with him. (*R. Steel.*) *The character of Saul*:—1. The first thought which occurs to us is—In this its first king, as in a mirror, behold Israel itself. Israel, like Saul, was chosen by God to rule the people. Israel was gifted with grace sufficient and upheld by glorious promises. But Israel, like Saul, has turned to his own way. Because he has rejected the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected him from being king. 2. The second thought is—In this character behold multitudes among ourselves reflected. How many are there, against whom nothing morally wrong can be alleged, who are not prone to any palpable vice, who have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, with whom every thing for time and eternity trembles on the balance, and the question is whether they will serve the Lord in life or whether they will not. Saul forgot the Lord his God. He sought not to Him for new supplies of that grace which had once been imparted to him. He was like one of those foolish ones who slumbered with their lamps burning, trusting that they would continue to burn on, but took no oil in their vessels for a supply. He went on his way, and thought not of God. But if forgetfulness of God be the passive symptom of the fatal disease, self-will is the active one. It was this which misled Saul. He leaned to his own understanding. He had his own ways, and his own calculations, where God's will had been already positively pronounced. (*H. Alford, B.D.*)

Ver. 24. I have sinned.—*Temporary religious feeling*:—"Some are frightened into a little religiousness in their straits and deep necessities, but it is poor work and superficial work. They are like an ice in thawing weather, soft at top and hard at bottom." They melt, but to no very great extent. It is upon the surface only that they yield to heavenly influences. This is a sorry state of things, for it generally ends in a harder frost than before, and the bonds of cold indifference bind the very soul. Let those in whom there are any meltings of holy feeling take heed, for their danger lies in being content with a partial subjection to gracious influences. Grace will be all or nothing: the ice must all melt, and the soul must flow like a river. Jesus did not come to create temporary and partial religious feeling, but to make new creatures of us. He will have nothing to do with those Ephraimites who are as half-done cakes, which are black on one side with too much baking, but have never been turned so as to feel the fire on the other side. The centre of the heart must feel the warmth of Divine love, or nothing is done. (C. H. Spurgeon.) **I feared the people and obeyed their voice.**—*Saul's excuse for disobedience*:—Saul makes three excuses for his disobedience, but they all shift the responsibility for his sin. Observe: 1. Saul's excuses are identical with those urged by sinners to-day: "I intended to give some of it to God." "I was over-persuaded." "I was overborne by the influence of others." "I did not sin wickedly and willfully." "It was only a mistake under a good motive." 2. Saul confesses the fimsiness of his excuses. Some time or other we must all come face to face with ourselves and stop making excuses, and cry, "Pardon my sin." 3. Saul confessed too late. Our sins reach their bounds and meet their penalty. 4. Saul repented only because he feared punishment. 5. Every man should make at once an honest self-examination. 6. When convicted of sin, we should without delay confess our sin. (*Homiletic Review*.)

Ver. 26. Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee.—*One sin too many*:—The whole story affords an extensive illustration of sin in almost all of its phases of manifestation as judged by the righteous law of God. 1. We discover the simple nature of sin: it is disobedience of a Divine command. 2. We learn, likewise, a lesson concerning the wide reach of sin. Saul felt quite independent in his disobedience. It is not possible for any man to keep his sin all to himself. This universe is balanced with great nicety. It cannot endure a sinner's perversity without suffering any more than an oarsman can tolerate a perverse boy in a boat; every time the self-willed creature steps across the thwart, he rocks the vessel, and makes it uncomfortable and perilous for each one who has anything to do with him. 3. Next to this, we discover an illustration of the bold effrontery of sin. Iniquity often tries to carry off shame with a show of daring, and attempts to restore its self-confidence with a complacency of self-congratulation. 4. Now comes a lesson concerning the certain discovery of sin. Guilt always feels lonely; and yet, curiously enough, always imagines that everybody knows about the crime. Conscience keeps the culprit excited, for he understands that nature positively abhors transgression of law. 5. Once more: the story gives us an illustration of the evasive meanness of sin. 6. Then we have a lesson concerning the hypocritical excuses offered for sin. 7. Now just at this point we receive a lesson concerning the just condemnation of sin. 8. There is likewise here an illustration of the aggregating force of sin. It is hardly worth while to attempt to enumerate the acts of wickedness which followed directly upon this first dereliction of Saul: treachery, lying, vanity, covetousness, hypocrisy—these were among them. There are degrees of depravity, no doubt; but all sin is bad, and tends to what is worse. 9. Still another lesson meets us here, and now it is concerning the inevitable result of sin. Saul had reached the limit of Divine forbearance. Indeed, he had already committed one sin too many. It was of no use for him to plead for pardon any more. There is something very strange in the subsequent career of this monarch; he seems bewildered and off his balance. All sin left to itself is hopeless. The kingdom was taken from this man so that he should not injure any one else any more. Even heathen people know that is just. When we were at school we used to declaim this sentence from Demosthenes' oration: "It is not possible, O Athenians! that a power should be permanent which is marked with injustice, perjury, and falsehood." Hence, finally, sin becomes massed and destructive. It is an Arab saying that we so often quote: "The last straw breaks the camel's back." No; it is the whole load that kills the camel, but it is the last straw which makes the load

complete and intolerable. When the fall of the beast comes, all the burden tells. A time arrives at the last when just one more little act of rebellion against God discharges all the violence of Divine wrath in an absolute reprobation. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *Samuel declaring the deposition of Saul*:—Few characters more blameless than that of Samuel. I. HIS OFFICE. This was to declare the will of God. He was not called to decide or to adjudicate, but to declare. When Saul was called to the kingdom, Samuel was employed to declare to him the call of God (I Sam. ix. 17, 20). He did not select, but declare God's selection. So when Saul was to be set aside, Samuel was employed to declare his deposition (I Sam. xv. 28). He did not depose, but declared God's deposition. II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH HE ACTED. 1. He was faithful to the Lord who sent him. He faithfully convicted Saul of his disobedience (ver. 14, 17). He showed him the hollowness of his vain excuses (vers. 22, 23). He fearlessly and faithfully told him that the Lord had that day rent the kingdom from him (ver. 26). Learn that those who have a message from God must give it faithfully. 2. He was most tender to the sinner to whom he was sent. Had he given way to personal jealousy, he might have been pleased at the fall of Saul; for when he was old the people had asked for a king in a most ungrateful spirit. But he showed no such mean jealousy. (1.) When he heard of Saul's fault, he was grieved, and spent the whole night in prayer (ver. 11). He did not give his reproof in a hard and unfeeling spirit, but with a sorrowing heart. The lips that seemed so severe in declaring judgment had been employed all night in pleading for mercy. 2. When the sentence of God was announced, he did all he could to mitigate the pain. It is the duty of the minister faithfully to denounce sin; but if he would do so effectually, he must prepare the way by tenderness, tears, and prayers; and he must accompany his painful message by a clear evidence of sorrowful tenderness towards the sinner. Nothing tends more to harden sinners than hard denunciation. (E. Horne, M.A.)

Ver. 30. **I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people.**—*True and false repentance*:—How may we discriminate between a merely seeming repentance and genuine penitence? There is hardly a passage of Scripture which could render us more decided assistance than that portion of Saul's history which here claims attention. I. WE SEE THAT THOUGH THERE WAS CONFESSION, IT WAS NOT MADE UNTIL SAUL WAS ACTUALLY COMPELLED TO MAKE IT, BECAUSE THE EVIDENCE OF HIS SIN WAS INCONTROVERTIBLY CLEAR. We see that the confession is wrung from him inch by inch, and it only comes at last when, as far as the facts were concerned, it made no difference whether he confessed or not, for he was proved to be guilty. We discover at once, in this circumstance, the opposite of that state of mind which feels the weight of personal sin, and which longs to unburden itself; and, as we compare it with that scripture (Prov. xxviii. 13) we are compelled to regard Saul's action rather as a bungling attempt to cover his sin—an attempt which, after all, did not succeed—than as that unburdening of conscious guilt which is alone consistent with true penitence. II. A SECOND PROOF AGAINST SAUL'S REAL PENITENCE IS HIS ATTEMPT TO PALLIATE THE CRIME WHICH HE HAD CONFESSED, BY THROWING THE BLAME ON OTHER PERSONS—"The people took of the spoil." According to his own view, he was more to be pitied than blamed—"I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." III. A THIRD PROOF AGAINST SAUL WAS HIS GREATER ANXIETY TO HAVE THE FORGIVENESS OF SAMUEL THAN TO RECEIVE THE PARDON OF GOD—the prominent place he gave to the one above the other consideration, "Now, therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord." What argued that postponement of God's pardon till he was reconciled to man—what but that he treated it as a matter which did not press immediately, which could be arranged subsequently? Could any real mourner for sin have felt thus? with such a penitent, is not the thought of God the one exciting, all-pervading idea in his contrition? How strange the contrast presented by the case before us, to that view of sincere repentance of which the Psalmist was the subject! There was fervour, indeed, in Saul, but fervour in the wrong direction. He would press his point with the prophet, and gain forgiveness if he could, but Samuel "turned about to go away." IV. A FOURTH CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH THROWS SUSPICION ON THE PENITENCE OF SAUL—THE MANNER IN WHICH HE SHOWED THAT ALL HIS DESIRE WAS TO STAND WELL IN PUBLIC ESTIMATION. He had evidently forfeited his claim on the good opinion of those around him. It was to be expected that,

having lost the favour of God, he would lose the regard of those around him. That must be an evil state of things which would enable a wrong-doer to obtain from public opinion an award in his favour; and what must have become of the cause of integrity—of honour—of justice—of all that is excellent, where, by reason of the low state of moral feeling, the voice of society is no longer heard to pronounce its verdict, distinctly and emphatically, against evil-doers and in praise of those who do well. In this respect, every community incurs a deep responsibility. To a rightly-constituted mind, even the favourable verdict of public opinion would be of little worth, except as it echoed the verdict of the court of heaven. This is the highest acquisition, "favour with God and man;" but the latter always in subordination to the former, never as a substitute for it. Saul reckoned that the people would think the better of him if he still ranked among the worshippers of God; he knew that to have given this up would have told effectually against him. There was something even beyond this. He knew that very much of the success of any effort which he might make to keep his place in the good opinion of the community would depend upon the way in which he was treated by Samuel. We blame not Saul for being anxious about public esteem, but we do blame him for being more solicitous about this than about God's judgment. (J. A. Miller.)

Ver. 32. **Surely, the bitterness of death is passed.**—*Death an advantage*.—So cried Agag, and the only objection I have to this text is that a bad man uttered it. Nevertheless, it is true, and in a higher sense than that in which it was originally uttered. We talk about the shortness of life, but if we exercised good sense we would realise that life is quite long enough. If we are the children of God, we are at a banquet, and this world is only the first course of the food, and we ought to be glad that there are other and richer courses of food to be bandied on. We are here in one room of our Father's house, but there are rooms upstairs. They are better pictured, better upholstered, better furnished. Why do we want to stay in the ante-room for ever, when there are palatial apartments waiting for our occupancy? What a mercy that there is a limitation to earthly environments! 1. Death also makes room for improved physical machinery. Our bodies have wondrous powers, but they are very limited. Death removes this slower and less adroit machinery and makes room for something better. Mind you, I believe with all anatomists and all physiologists, and with all scientists and with the Psalmist that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made." But I believe and I know that God can and will give us better physical equipment. Is it possible for man to make improvements in almost anything and God not be able to make improvements in man's physical machinery? Shall canal boats give way to limited express train? Shall slow letter give place to telegraphy, that places San Francisco and New York within a minute of communication? Shall the telephone take the sound of a voice sixty miles and instantly bring back another voice, and God, who made the man who does these things, not be able to improve the man himself with infinite velocities and infinite multiplication? Beneficent Death comes in and makes the necessary removal to make way for these supernatural improvements. "Well," you say, "does not that destroy the idea of a resurrection of the present body?" Oh no. It will be the old factory with new machinery, new driving wheel, new bands, new levers, and new powers. Don't you see? So I suppose the dullest human brain after the resurrectionary process will have more knowledge, more acuteness, more brilliancy, more breadth of swing than any Sir William Hamilton, or Herschel, or Isaac Newton, or Faraday, or Agassiz ever had in the mortal state or all their intellectual powers combined. You see God has only just begun to build you. 2. Then there are the climatological hindrances. We run against unpropitious weather of all sorts. Winter blizzard and summer scorch, and each season seems to hatch a brood of its own disorders. Have you any doubt that God can make better weather than is characteristic of this planet? Blessed is Death! for it prepares the way for change of zones, yea, it clears the path to a semi-omnipresence. While death may not open opportunity to be in many places at the same time, so easy and so quick and so instantaneous will be the transference that it will amount to about the same thing. Quicker than I can speak this sentence you will be among your glorified kindred, among the martyrs, among the apostles, in the gate, on the battlements, at the temple, and now from world to world as soon as a robin hops from one tree branch to another tree branch. Distance no hindrance. Immensity

easily compassed. Semi-omnipresence. Aye! to make that resurrection body will not require half as much ingenuity and power as those other bodies you have had. Is it not easier for a sculptor to make a statue out of silent clay than it would be to make a statue out of some material that is alive and moving, and running hither and thither? Will it not be easier for God to make the resurrection body out of the silent dust of the crumbled body than it was to make your body over five or six or eight times while it was in motion, walking, climbing, falling, or rising? 3. Now, if Death clears the way for all this, why paint him as a hobgoblin? Why call him the King of Terrors? Why sketch him with skeleton and arrows, and standing on a bank of dark waters? Why have children so frightened at his name that they dare not go to bed alone, and old men have their teeth chatter lest some shortness of breath hand them over to the monster? All the ages have been busy in maligning Death, hurling repulsive metaphors at Death, slandering Death. Oh, for the sweet breath of Easter to come down on the earth! I was told, at Johnstown, after the flood, that many people who had been for months and years bereft, for the first time got comfort when the awful flood came, to think that their departed ones were not present to see the catastrophe. As the people were floating down on the house-tops, they said: "Oh, how glad I am that father and mother are not here," or "how glad I am that the children are not alive to see this horror!" And ought not we who are down here amid the upturnings of this life be glad that none of the troubles which submerge us can ever fright our friends ascended? "Surely, the bitterness of death is past." Further, if what I have been saying is true, we should trust the Lord and be thrilled with the fact that our own day of escape cometh. If our lives were going to end when our hearts ceased to pulsate and our lungs to breathe, I would want to take ten million years of life here for the first instalment. But we cannot afford always to stay down in the cellar of our Father's house. We cannot always be postponing the best things. We cannot always be tuning our violins for the celestial orchestra. We must get our wings out. We must mount. We cannot afford always to stand out here in the vestibule of the house of many mansions. All these thoughts are suggested as we stand this morn amid the broken rocks of the Saviour's tomb. The day that Christ rose and came forth the sepulchre was demolished for ever, and no trowel of earthly masonry can ever rebuild it. "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (*T. de Witt Talmage.*) *The bitterness of death*.—I. **WAY BITTER.** Because—1. It is accompanied with physical sufferings. 2. It is the end of earthly hopes and advantages. 3. It separates from friends. 4. There is within us a fear of the unknown realities beyond the grave. 5. In each heart there is a consciousness of sin. II. **HOW THIS BITTERNESS MAY BE CHANGED TO SWEETNESS.** Faith in Christ. 1. Makes physical sufferings trivial. 2. Assures us of hopes and advantages infinitely more important than those which perish through death. 3. Introduces us to the friendship of all heaven, and this for all eternity. 4. Makes to know that Christ, our Brother, and God, our Father, dominate all other realities in the world to come. 5. It clothes us with the righteousness of Christ. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (*Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 33. **And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.**—*The vindictive justice of God*.—God, who viewed Agag as an enemy to Himself and to His people, would not release him from the punishment he deserved; but inspired Samuel to give him a just recompense of reward. This striking instance of the Divine conduct teaches us that God is more disposed to punish His enemies than sinners are to punish theirs. I. **I AM TO SHOW THAT SINNERS ARE DISPOSED TO PUNISH THEIR ENEMIES.** This will appear both from their character and conduct. 1. It appears from their character, as drawn by the Searcher of hearts. God perfectly knows their real feelings, and has clearly described them in His word. And according to His infallible description, they are entirely selfish. They possess not the least spark of holy love, but are under the entire dominion of selfishness. Though their selfishness disposes them to love those who love them, yet it no less disposes them to bate those who hate them, whether they are friendly or unfriendly to God. Esau hated Jacob because Jacob had injured his interest. Sinners, who are under the reigning power of selfishness, are not only hateful, but they hate one another. 2. It more clearly appears from their conduct than from their character, that they are disposed to punish their enemies.

They have been in all ages imbruing their hands in each other's blood. Nations have destroyed nations, and filled the earth with violence. I proceed, therefore, to the principal point proposed, which is, to show, II. THAT GOD IS MORE DISPOSED TO PUNISH HIS ENEMIES THAN SINNERS ARE TO PUNISH THEIRS. God knows that sinners are His enemies, and hate His existence, His perfections, His designs, and His whole government. He knows that they hate Him without a cause, as He has always treated them perfectly right. He knows that they are enemies to one another, and to all intelligent creatures. He viewed Agag as an enemy to all righteousness; and He views all sinners in the same light. It may be inquired, why God was more disposed to punish Agag than Saul was? and why in all cases, he is more disposed to punish His enemies, than sinners are to punish their enemies? To this I answer—1. It is because He hates the conduct of His enemies simply considered, but sinners do not hate the conduct of their enemies simply considered. Though their enemies may act sinfully, it is not their sinfulness that they hate. It is only because their sinfulness is pointed against them, and does them hurt, that they hurt it. 2. God is more disposed to punish His enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, because His hatred to His enemies cannot be turned into love. The hatred of sinners can be turned into love, because they do not hate the character, but only the conduct of their enemies, which they view as detrimental to themselves. 3. God's hatred of His enemies is perfectly just, but sinners' hatred of their enemies is always unjust. They never hate them for what they ought to be hated, but only for the injury which they receive from them. They do not hate them for selfishness, which is the only thing for which they ought to be hated; and therefore their very hatred is selfish and wicked, for which they really deserve to be punished. 4. There is another reason why God is more disposed to punish His enemies, than sinners are to punish theirs; and that is, His regard to the good of the universe, which sinners totally disregard in punishing their enemies. They are disposed to punish their enemies for their own sake, and not for the good of others. They are disposed to punish, merely to gratify their own feelings, whether it tends to help or hurt any other person or being besides themselves. 1. If sinners are less disposed to punish their sinful enemies than God is to punish His enemies, then their tender mercies are unholy and criminal. 2. If God is more disposed to punish His enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then none can truly love God without loving His vindictive justice. This is an essential tribute of His nature; and He can no more divest Himself of it than He can divest Himself of any other essential attribute than He possesses. He has as plainly revealed His vindictive justice in His word, and as strikingly displayed it in His providence, as any one of His glorious perfections. 3. If God be more disposed to punish His enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then His present conduct in punishing sinners is a strong evidence that He will punish the finally impenitent. 4. If God is more disposed to punish His enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then all real saints are willing that God should punish His enemies as much and as long as they deserve to be punished. Samuel was willing to punish Agag, and hew him in pieces before the Lord, and at His command. Every good man has that within him which approves and loves the justice of God in punishing sin. Every good man is holy, as God is holy, and loves what God loves, and hates what God hates. 5. If God is more disposed to punish His enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then sinners must have a new heart, in order to enter into and enjoy the kingdom of heaven. 6. If God is more disposed to punish His enemies than sinners are to punish theirs, then sinners have no ground to depend upon the patience of God. Sinners are extremely apt to depend upon the patience of God, supposing that He does and will wait upon them, because He pities them, and is unwilling to punish them. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (N. Emmons, D.D.)

Ver. 35. **Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death.**—*Samuel's withdrawal from Saul*:—Very few bad persons are without some "redeeming quality," as it is called; and "redeeming qualities" are usually precisely of that kind by which we are most fascinated. The "redeeming qualities" of a wicked man are, however, the very things which should cause us most to fear for those with whom he comes in contact. 1. Few—very few, avoid falling into the error of mistaking what are symptoms of possible good in the

future for tokens of real good at the present time, and from at least occasionally thinking that their deliberately formed opinion of the entire character was after all incorrect, and that the persons in whom these good qualities are so clearly observable cannot be wicked at all. These, of course, will think and speak of the "redeeming qualities," not as redeeming qualities, but as the main features of the character, and try to persuade themselves that it is for the sake of these they continue intimacies which their consciences tell them require in some way to be defended. 2. Besides this proneness to self-deceit, which in greater or less force lurks in the best of us, there are two other causes which expose us to the danger of being injured by the "redeeming qualities" of godless men. One is the fact that there are undoubtedly blemishes in the characters of very good men. 3. The other source of danger is this. The very best of men are known to entertain an affection for bad men. From this it is argued that the men are not bad. Samuel had an affection for Saul. Saul had many "redeeming qualities"—qualities calculated to make him exceedingly popular. Nor was this all. He had a good deal about him to be liked, and Samuel did like him. A good man, then, may have an affection for a bad man, without being at all mistaken as to his character; nay, even after he had been, as in the case before us, the very persons who had himself pronounced the Divine condemnation. We must not, then, be led astray as to the real characters of those whom we should otherwise feel bound to regard as dangerous by the mere fact that they have awakened an affection in those whom we justly reverence. Had we known no more than "that there was a King of Israel named Saul," and that the holy Samuel mourned exceeding for him on his losing the kingdom, we should, I think, have taken for granted that Saul was a good man, and yet you see we should have been wrong. 4. This discontinuance of personal intercourse with Saul shows us also the limits of a good man's companionship with a bad man. So long as there is any reasonable hope of his "redeeming qualities" becoming so developed as to constitute the main features, instead of the exceptional points of his character—so long as the influence imperceptibly exercised by early companionship seems likely to be instrumental in bringing about this change, just so long familiar intercourse with one whose grave faults we perceive may be continued without breach of duty towards God: but so soon as that time has gone by—so soon as these hopes seem unreasonable, then, although the regard still linger, the familiar acquaintance must be abandoned. Every case will, of course, have its peculiarities calling for especial consideration. But still there are certain classes of cases in which we may reasonably suppose that our associating with bad men will be unlikely to benefit them, in which the probabilities are so much against it that we had better not make the attempt, in which we had better not so much look to the possibility of our improving another as to that of his injuring us, in which the foremost thought in our minds should be, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Generally speaking, a good and a bad man cannot be much together without either being, however little or imperceptibly, changed by the other. Nor should it be forgotten that the companionship of a good man may be a positive injury to a bad man. He may deceive himself into the belief that his faults are not so great or dangerous as they really are, by the reflection that a good man and a sensible man would not like him if he were not in the main good also. Universally, on persons of about our own age and our own social position, who are obviously and ostentatiously opposing themselves to the precepts of the Gospel, our constant companionship is not likely to produce a good effect, except we be more than ordinarily religious and firm ourselves. Of all the instances you ever knew in which a woman entertained that wildest of notions that she would be able, after marriage, to reform the man over whom her influence was powerless before it—of all such instances—and there are numbers of them, how many are the successes you can recall? In how many do you know the result to have been intense and irremediable misery? No, there are those whose age or weight of character enables them without danger or misrepresentation to attempt the reformation of the wicked by being, to some extent, in their society. There are those who, perhaps, to both these qualifications have superadded the incentive of personal liking. Samuel was one of this sort. yet even to him the time came when he, the old man, the good man, the minister of God, the man with a strong affection towards Saul, felt it his duty to "see him no more." (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) *Separation of Samuel and Saul*:—It was a final parting: "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." They

had now nothing in common. Their views and principles were widely dissimilar. They sought not the same ends, and they used very different means. Samuel so closely followed the will and way of God that he could not have fellowship with a throne of iniquity. A lifetime's godliness had made Samuel very jealous of the glory of God. He would not compromise his principles for the sake of keeping the favour of a king; and lest he should be understood as approving of Saul's procedure he absented himself altogether from his court. His absence would be a constant reproof of Saul's wilful career—a significant token that he deemed his policy ungodly. There are circumstances in the history of the believer, and even of the Church, when separation from those with whom there have been union and fellowship becomes a duty. When any one finds that by his station or character he is likely to influence others, if he openly unites with those whose policy he disapproves, he is bound to separate. When any one discovers that he cannot, without countenancing the sin of others, continue in their fellowship he is bound to withdraw. When any one learns that his soul is imperilled by remaining with the ungodly, he must separate. The sacrifice of the dearest ties, the richest gains, and the most cherished associations, must be made, when duty to Christ demands it. Our Lord has laid down the law of a Christian in such circumstances in the plainest terms: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me," &c. You may be associated in relationships that forbid your separation. The law of Christ does not demand the believer to break up his nuptial tie, or his filial ties; but it demands his faithful witness-bearing at home. There must be no compromise with truth—with Christ—to please any friend. The world is not to be met half-way. We are not to conciliate by compromise. In the sixteenth century, separation from Rome became the duty of all enlightened souls who protested against the errors and crimes of Modern Babylon. Samuel went away in sorrow. He mourned for Saul. He did not part with him because his heart was steeled against him, or because of any unkindly feeling towards him personally. He yearned after the king with all the affection of a broken-hearted parent. Samuel mourned for Saul, for he pitied the people. Saul was a king according to their mind, and it was to be feared that they would approve of his infatuated policy, and thus turn away from God. Perhaps this had an influence upon his determination to separate from Saul, that all Israel might see that he was no more a party to their monarch's ways. When so good a man as Samuel retired from fellowship with Saul, they might perhaps reflect upon their own safety. But people are blind, and require long discipline to correct their sins and reform their ways. (*R. Steel.*)

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1. How long wilt thou mourn for Saul.—*Overmuch sorrow, and its cure:*—In one of the visions of the prophet Ezekiel, a man with a writer's ink-horn in his hand was commissioned to "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst" of Jerusalem. Samuel was one who sighed and cried for the abominations which were done by Saul in his day. But sorrow, however reasonable and becoming, may be carried too far. It may be indulged until it unfits us for duty, or darkens our hope in God; it may disturb our peace and weaken our energies; it may be made an occasion of our halting, and of our neglecting public duty. The very tenderness of Samuel's heart and his jealousy for God had bedimmed his faith, and kept him bemoaning the case of the king. There is a lesson in this of very great practical importance. We may have lost a bosom friend or we may have witnessed a son of many prayers despising parental counsel, and rushing headlong to eternal ruin. God's wisdom is infallible, and in its developments in Providence is always tempered by His love to us. His removal of any of the objects of your affection is now beyond recall. You have duties to God, to your own soul, and to others, which cannot afford the consumption of your energies in sorrow. In the obedience of His will your griefs will be assuaged and sanctified. Samuel was summoned from his vale of tears to undertake a new commission and provide a new leader for

the chosen people. A new care is to occupy the prophet's mind, a new friend is to draw forth his affection, and new objects of labour and of love are to engage him. The sense of personal and relative responsibility is made by God to rebuke and cure a sorrow deemed inconsolable. Those whose spirits were burdened by heavy grief, caused by losses or by crimes, took up a pilgrim's staff and made a journey to the Holy Land. It was generally believed that a pilgrimage, or a soldiership in the holy wars, was penance sufficient to expiate sin and remove the burden of a sorrowful spirit. But there is a pilgrimage and a cross-bearing eminently serviceable to heal a sorrowful spirit, and to this every mourner is personally called. "How long wilt thou mourn? . . . Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee." Yes, mourner, take your staff and go. You have rested long enough at Marah, and drank enough of its bitter water. Circumstances call upon you to journey in the service of the Lord. Your regrets and melancholy indicate need of further conformity to the Lord Jesus. Your grief will be moderated by the satisfaction of obedience to Christ. 1. There is a duty to the Lord. Like Samuel, you are in His service, and have vowed to do His will and to acquiesce in His ways. David lay upon the earth, fasted, and prayed, while affliction was upon his child; but when he learned the issue—that the child was dead—he "arose from the earth." God does not forbid tears, but He expects obedience in resignation and the discharge of duty. 2. There is a duty to your own soul. "Why go I mourning?" "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, Who is the health of my countenance, and my God." The greatest cause for mourning in this world is conviction of personal guilt in the sight of God. The effect of God's truth upon the conscience is to call forth bitter sorrow. The convicted sinner repents and wrings his soul in sorrow, and often in tears. In the Puritan revivals of the seventeenth century this was no less characteristic of the awakening appeals of Baxter and of Flavel, of Owen and of Howe, of Rogers and of Bunyan, of Welch and of Dickson, of Rutherford and of Blair. Deep sorrow for sin marked all awakened souls in that extensive reformation of religion. At such a time many do not know what to do to obtain peace. They cry with the Jews of old, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and with the jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" There is oil of joy for such mourning. Relief must come from without. It is not to be got by brooding over your guilt and sorrow, but by arising and going to the Saviour. 3. There is a duty to others. Samuel had something more to live for than his own interest. He was an important member of the Hebrew commonwealth. His grief was a public calamity. The sorrow into which he was plunged might do injury. When there are others to care for, sorrow must not be immoderate. Our friends make demands upon our anxieties, and prayers, and labours. No partial affection for those who are lost can excuse neglect of those who are spared. No regret for the dead can apologise for inattention to the living. How strong an appeal is this to moderate and sanctify sorrow! Labourers for Christ! you may have to mourn over disappointed hopes and lost opportunities, and you may be ready to give way to melancholy at the retrospect of your want of success. But this mourning is ill-judged, sinful, and disastrous. Arise, fill your horn with oil and go to work again. (*R. Steel.*) *Mourning for the living:*—We generally mourn for a man when the light has gone from his eye and his form is still in death. But Saul was worth a good many dead men. He did not pass to his fathers for twenty-three years after the time these words were spoken concerning him. And yet with Saul in the very prime of manhood, God said unto Samuel, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?" Samuel had seen with sorrow the king's lack of high purpose and endurance. He had seen the stress of life tearing the anchor from the rock. Judging by the subsequent life of the ex-king, the rejection was a deeper sorrow to Samuel than to Saul. Samuel knew that in the chosen king was that spark of goodness that needed but to be fanned to become a flame; he knew also that Saul by his own acts was extinguishing even that spark. In the life that men saw, Saul was enriched; in the life that God saw, he was impoverished. And when the inevitable judgment came—in the removal of the sceptre—Samuel mourned for Saul. Of what truths does the story of the royal cast-away remind us? I. THAT A MAN MAY BE DEAD WHILE YET ALIVE. All around us we see men dumb to Divine questionings, deaf to human pleadings, blind to the uplifting vision, men whose Bible is the ledger, whose only church is the shop, whose one god is gold. Such men are dead while yet alive. Samuel of old mourned for

the living, and the living still causes hearts to mourn. A mother's tears for her prodigal son may be more bitter than those which fall upon his coffin. A father's anguish for his daughter's sin may be more intense than the anguish born of her passing into the Unseen. The presence of the dead is physically harmful to the living, but the spiritually dead are more harmful. Physical death is inevitable, but it is not the worst thing that can befall a man. The death of the soul causes the very angels to weep. II. **THAT TO LIVE TRULY IS TO LIVE TRIUMPHANTLY.** And to be victorious in all things is one of the natural and inherent desires of the human heart. Men desire to be mighty, but the might of man must be based upon the eternal right of God. Triumph cannot be divorced from truth, for God has joined them in an indissoluble bond. There was no hope for Saul as a king, but there was hope for him as a man. The old adage, "While there's life there's hope," is profoundly true. If we will but stand still, we shall see the salvation of God. The very atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being is charged with resurrection power. "Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light." (F. Burnett.) **I have rejected him.**—*The root of national faults illustrated in the life of Saul.*—The character of Saul would be by itself sufficient to arrest the attention of the most heedless reader of the annals of human nature; but seen by the side of David, it is more remarkable still. The contrast between the two is strong and lucid at every point. Saul is the man of the world in every respect. He is the Roman hero, shot with the colours of the despotic East; the kind of man who ever has been the hero and demi-god of the world's idolatry and worship, and ever will be; while David in but few particulars would obtain the admiration of mankind. There is just the difference between the two that there is between the natural and spiritual man; between him who is governed by natural religion, and him who is governed by the grace of God. But while this is the case with Saul as an individual, he resembles in a striking manner the character of nations. While he embodies the spirit of Rome, and the philosophic Greek, and bears the strong impress of the Asiatic despot, he gathers up into himself the leading features of our own nation. He is very Saxon. The errors which we as a nation are constantly making, are, in all their leading features, those of the King of Israel. We are inclined nationally to embody the elements which form Saul's character, and to worship the result. We are inclined as a nation, in each circle of our society, educated and uneducated, to despise those elements which form David's.

I. **THE CHARACTER OF SAUL:**—Saul's appearance was in his favour: men always are favourably impressed by personal advantages. Height, power, and beauty are ever weights thrown into the descending scale in the hand of the world. Facility is half the man. 2. He was reserved; and every man who has the power of reserve gains two steps to the one gained by him who speaks his feelings; simply because the tongue is the first instrument of hurried conviction, and the rapid speaker makes many slips. To have perception, feeling, and discernment, but to be able to hold them all in check, is one of our greatest powers. But the same force which Saul could use over his private feelings of this kind, he was also able to use over his affections. The world has ever admired this kind of trait, from Brutus downwards; but after all it may be an over-rated virtue. Saul valued religion. With no religious faith, he knew the value of religion. 5. Saul, too, was proud, intensely proud. Saul had no vanity; but he had genuine pride. 6. Then he was generous; and generosity is ever valued by the world. 7. But the determination to recognise the externals of religion led him often into something very like dissimulation. But dissimulation in certain things is a virtue in the world: it is so with matters to do with religion. 8. But there is a second stage in Saul's career which is highly significant. God gave up Saul, and the difference was manifest; the evil spirit occupied him at once. 9. Then came the third stage—strikingly consistent, however paradoxical, with the others—the stage of superstition. The large-minded infidel becomes narrowed to the small compass of the superstitious, and he for whom God and His Church were not wide enough, satisfies himself with the Witch of Endor. He who found the priesthood too confined a means to attain his end, and the sacrifices too formal, bowed before an incantation, and shivered before a ghost. The only truly wide-minded man is he whose thought and soul are limited by the Word and Will of God. His death was worthy of him. The Roman philosopher fell upon his sword: and Saul strove to perish by suicide. II. **BUT SAUL IS BEST SEEN IN CONTRAST.** The key to Saul's character is self-seeking: that unlocks each

portion of his being. David's soul was fixed on seeing God. He was absorbed in the Being in Whom he lived, died, and had his being. The world cannot appreciate this; and if the world cannot, still less the infidel. 1. Saul, I said, delighted in reserve: David expressed everything. His heart was full, and "out of the abundance of his heart his mouth spake." Saul delighted to show independence of every one, and contempt of those on whose aid he might be supposed to rely. Far otherwise with the son of Jesse. He was ever bewailing the conduct "of the sons of Zeruiah," courting Abner, or pacifying Joab. He seemed to delight in showing his real dependence on all who surrounded his throne. 3. Saul calmly swore that Jonathan should die, and the entreaty of a people and a devoted army could hardly rescue him from his hands; and yet what son deserved more at a father's hands than Jonathan? David wept for Absalom, a rebel and a hardened libertine. 4. With Saul, sacrifices, priests, and prophets were but useful unrealities, figures of a clever fiction, *dramatis personæ* of the stage on which he happened to be acting: with David they were powerful realities. 5. Saul reserved the prey and spoil for himself, and made his own compromise with God. David's obedience was entire; his own will was that it was not more perfect than it was. Saul never committed himself before the people; David often did. He never strove to conceal the feeling which worked within him. 6. One feature in Saul's character I have not mentioned—his regard for aristocracy and wealth. Agag and the flocks were saved, and that at the expense of God's Will and word. The son of Jesse found delight equally with the poor and lowly, as with the sons of kings and the hereditary princes of foreign lands. 7. Saul became the slave of Satan, and his heart the dismal scene of the operations of evil spirits; David became "the man after God's own heart." 8. Saul's soul narrowed as he advanced: the temple in which it at last worshipped was the Witch's Cave at Endor. David's daily widened. The Temple of Jerusalem was the design of his old age; and the expansive knowledge of God and His Law is recognised in many a Psalm. Saul lived to establish and elevate self. Proud, independent, and ironical, he moved over a plane of his own. But he left no crown to his son. His very descendants were extirpated. David had no such aim; he never thought of aggrandisement or of self; but his son sat on his throne, and that to many generations. And the Son of David occupies the throne of eternity. "He shall reign for ever and ever Lord of lords and King of kings." The two are placed in such singular juxta-position and contrast, that they must be intended to be viewed together. III. THE STRIKING APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTER OF SAUL TO OUR OWN NATION AND RACE. Is there not among us an inclination to view the Church as a means rather of keeping the people in subjection, and a great and efficient instrument for education, than as having a real and intrinsic power of its own—a sacramental energy, which is there, whether we use it or no? Is there no tendency, too, besides that very superstition, when we are religious, which marks the impression of unreality as clinging to all the great external observances of Christianity? 1. We have national traits of pride, independence and reserve, which remind us of the clever king. When his election was in hand, "he hid himself among the stuff, and he could not be found." It was the affectation of reserve. His contemptuous silence at the neglect of the men of Belial, and those other occasions referred to above, show the same tendency. Our reserve as a nation goes far, and shows itself in many ways. There is a lurking disposition to suppress the expression of distinctive Christianity, and to use the parlance of natural religion in preference to that of the Christian. Is it not true that that very suppression of natural impulses which society is inclined to admire and almost to deify, is after all often a cloak for a more subtle form of self-seeking and proud independence? We see the inclination to suppress natural affections from an early age. The schoolboy scarcely likes to own his mother, and is not sure whether he ought not to be ashamed of his sister. This state of things belongs especially to my own country. It is not found in the same way on the continent. The natural emotions of the heart are more recognised and honoured among other people than among ourselves. We may rate the subjugation of natural affections too highly; we may be passing by some other tendency, in whose discipline we shall gain a higher standing. 2. But there is a still more striking parallel in the case of Saul. His tendency was aristocratic and avaricious. He obeyed God's order in invading the territory of Amalek. But he preserved the king and the sheep. The soft yet imperious call of kindred sovereignty were too much for the lowly-born monarch. For this he sacrificed

his obedience to God. The tinkle of the ornaments which sounded on the camel's neck of the Amalekite prince, were more attractive than the approval of the Prophet. May we here, too, find no parallel with ourselves? Though we are proud of the free access to high position offered to the lowliest born of those whose circumstances are most humble; and while a popular government guarded by the restraints of a monarchical and aristocratical influence is our often-repeated boast among the nations of the earth; still, is there not a singular inclination to covet the smile and favour of the nobly-born, and a constant recognition of the fact that we would sacrifice distinctive Christianity rather than the approval and countenance of a court? We worship respectability. Its forms peer in the background of all our professions. 3. But more, Saul saved the sheep. Money is sometimes the cry of a nation, and the amassing wealth, or standing high in a commercial reputation, frequently transcends the homage paid to God Himself. 4. But a graver evil still is suggested by Saul's character. His religious belief was broken. It rung to the touch of the world outside; but it had no substance. It was not faith. Religion and the Church were machines with him available for important State purposes, but here they stopped. The ministry of the Church may be represented as, and treated like, a foible, with no commission beyond the civil appointment. The Church herself is looked upon as a State machine, to be curtailed or amplified at no higher bidding than that of the earthly sovereign. And yet with all this the respect paid to those who occupy ecclesiastical position and office reminds us at every turn of Saul's homage to Samuel, while he laughed at the effort made by the Prophet to establish anything more than a conventional position. The day may come, and that soon, when this momentous question may sever man from man with a wrench, for which Church history in this country has scarcely a parallel. The day when men must say whether there be anything or nothing in the Holy Eucharist; whether the ministry be an order which holds its charter from heaven; and whether the Church herself, be descended by Divine appointment through successive ages, the Bride of Christ and the instrument of salvation to man; or whether she be merely the best arrangement existing to carry out the ends of the politician and the legislator. These things are either anything or nothing. 5. But the end of Saul was singular. From the dreams of unrealities and shams he betook himself to the pursuit of the figures of superstition. He forsook the boundless expanse of scepticism to pen himself up in the dark and confined cell of superstition. In pursuing the parallel we must see whether, as a nation, we may not be yielding to superstition, while we reject religion. The attendance at church on Sunday morning performed as an act of expiation for the sins of the week past, and palliation of the intended laxity of the week to come; the subscription offered to the swelling list of benefactions for this public charity or the other; the mite offered from the ample fortune to the Church to justify the alienation of the remainder of fortune to self; are really acts of superstition. Saul perished on the field of battle. It may be that by a fall from the pride of military glory nations of similar characters to the Israelitish king may have yet to learn that it is not in the bow, or in the horse, or in princes is the safe trust, but only in the Lord our God. Men tell us we must have a fall. The world at large have detected British pride. It may be magnificent, it may be successful, it may draw down admiration, or fear, or awe; it may compel homage; it may dazzle the eye of the observer, lest he detect flaws which really exist; but it must be offensive to God, it must "have a fall." It is "the meek who will inherit the earth." (*G. Monro.*) *The true and the counterfeit*:—As the Bible may be called God's Picture Gallery, so the Holy Spirit frequently hangs up side by side two portraits which bear much resemblance to each other, and yet have points of striking difference. I think it is plainly one of God's great purposes to help us to discriminate between the true and the false. Judas and Peter both act basely; but one is a traitor, while Peter, with all his sin, is a genuine disciple. The same contrast, again, we observe in the case of Demas and Luke. "For," says St. Paul, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed to Thessalonica:" "Only Luke is with me." One more contrast let me remind you of. In the eighth chapter of the Acts we read of Simon Magus, how he was astonished, believed, and was baptised; but he was not converted; his heart was not right in the matter; and Peter tells him, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." But at the close of that chapter we have in the Ethiopian eunuch a beautiful instance

of honest search after truth, and simple belief. I. **THE SAD STORY OF SAUL'S LIFE.** I think we shall be led to observe the dramatic effect produced in the arrangement of the First Book of Samuel. As in the earliest chapters the pious childhood of Samuel is contrasted with the profligate career of the sons of Eli, so, as we dwell upon the later chapters, our minds are continually divided between admiration of David's fortitude, charity, and holy faith; and pity for the sinful course and evident misery of the once noble king of Israel. 1. There is certainly much about Saul's early conduct which is very captivating. He was a very fine young man; taller by a head and shoulders than any of the people, and there seems to have been, at first, a very pleasing humility in him; he said nothing to his uncle of his prospects. Then he was a man of warm affections. Again, he was a man who had evidently received some religious impressions. Still I think we are warranted in saying that there was no work of grace in his soul. It is said indeed of Saul, that "God gave him another heart," and that "the Spirit of God came upon him;" but as God never calls to a work without giving the power to perform it, this only refers to his qualifications for government. 2. Notice, next, the steps in his decline. While he was in humble life he had a humble spirit, but prosperity was too much for him: with wealth and power came spiritual decline. Oh, beware of ambition: beware how you "seek great things for yourselves." You are thinking of advancement, perhaps, desiring promotion, or laying up a fortune. Look at Saul; look at Solomon; and I think you will pray, in the words of our Litany, "In all time of our wealth, Good Lord, deliver us." Saul's prosperity was his ruin. David says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted:" nay, I am inclined to think that even in his case there is a beautiful simplicity of character, and steadfastness of faith, a singleness of eye, during the times of his affliction, which we often look for in vain when things went well with him. Next, we observe in Saul what is sure to come with pride and ambition, a want of faith, and an impatience, which led him to offer the sacrifice, instead of waiting for Samuel. Prosperity had been too much for him: he had begun to depart from God. When faith in the unseen is weak, and heavenly things do not occupy the soul, it almost always falls a prey to covetousness: and hence his sin on this occasion; the spoil was too tempting, and he seizes upon it like Achan. II. **YOUR DUTY TOWARDS MERE PROFESSORS**—towards those who, while in many respects they resemble Christ's disciples, are not really the people of God. It is said that one use that is being made of the metal called aluminium, is the manufacture of sovereigns so nearly resembling the current coin that it is extremely difficult to distinguish between them. The stamp is in all respects perfect, the colour is the same, they are even of the same weight, and the application of some acids produces no results. Still there is a difference in value, and of course they will be able to discover it at the banks. Satan is very clever; he has been able to produce, in all ages of the Church, splendid hypocrites, such as have deceived some even of the elect. Still, there is a difference at heart between every child of God and every child of the devil. How shall I know a Judas from a Peter, a Demas from a Luke, a Saul from a David? Contemplate Jesus; let His perfect form continually fill your eye: walk yourself habitually with Him; and then you will not long be deceived. 1. There is a duty of separation. It became Samuel's duty to separate from his friend; and we read that "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Are you as particular about this as you should be? You must not be too lax in your judgments. Those first six verses of Matt. vii. show you that while it is not your duty to condemn, it is your duty to discriminate. 2. Yet there is one more duty which we learn from Samuel's conduct towards Saul. Samuel mourned for Saul. And so we have the picture of the one man going on from bad to worse, adding sin to sin; and his friend, who, from duty to God, felt constrained to keep aloof from him, still mourning over and praying for him: even as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. (*C. Bosanquet, M.A.*) *Vindication of the sentence on Saul*:—Saul was a man, an Israelite, a king, the first king of Israel; under these heads let us group our observations. 1. He was a man. Is this a great thing? Yes, very. There are so many of us that we think lightly of our kind. But what lofty dignity there is in manhood! What marvellous responsibilities cluster about it! Crowned with a kingly immortality how sublimely important is each individual! God's claims are on that heart. Each instance of withdrawal or suspension of its homage, nay, even the independent action of its powers without reference to heavenly supremacy, is an act of disloyalty. If this earth contained

but one rebel how would his loyal fellows stare at the prodigy! But no familiarity with sin can, in God's estimate, take away its first offensiveness. How preposterously foolish to quarrel with the Great King when, in any instance, He makes the line of judicial infliction in temporal things approach the line of the sinner's deservings! 2. Saul was an Israelite. As such, the claims of God, and his own responsibilities were largely increased. The will of God pressed with peculiar force on the conscience of every member of that nation. The Jew who neglected, or interfered to modify the Divine will was doubly culpable. Still further aggravated would be the offence if that will were plainly laid before the mind and emphatically pressed upon the conscience. Precisely such was the case of that offender whose conduct we are reviewing. 3. Saul was king of Israel. As such, he was vicergerent of God. God's lieutenant and the asserter of Israel's rights ought to have set himself promptly to the completion of the case against Amalek by avenging upon them the dishonour of God, and the damage done to His people. See we not here that insubmissiveness of will, that independence of aim and action which form the germ of all the evil that has intruded upon God's holy universe. Nor is it a valid plea, palliating deviation from the strict and full performance of his commission, that it involved a dreadful sacrifice of human life. And if his heart recoiled more violently from the execution of the king than from the carnage of the whole nation, this only adds another touch to the outline of his vanity. It would be a rare triumph for him to lead about the captured king of their oldest and bitterest enemies. 4. Saul was the first king of Israel. The nation had just passed through an important crisis. The change of government was the permitted consequence of national unfaithfulness to God. His holy presence, as their immediate Ruler, was irksome to their criminal independence, and alarming to their conscience. When their king fully develops his character, he is found to be animated by the same views and feelings. Here, then, are most critical circumstances. The people have drifted far into the region of disloyalty to God and indifference to Divine things, and the change of Government which this ungodliness introduced has added new force to the current of growing degeneracy. The king has connived at disobedience. Most perilous precedent! Doubly so at the commencement of a new regime which it must help to mould. If knighthood, in its early days, be permitted with impunity to tamper thus with the behests of God, and vaunt itself in the spoils of authority reft from the majesty of heaven, what shall the end be? The case is urgent. A preventive, however terrible, must be applied. (P. Richardson.)

Vers. 4—13. And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem.—*Samuel's visit to Bethlehem*:—1. How much history is entwined around one locality! The very name of a village recalls events most momentous to the world, and fills our minds with the memories of the past. "Man is a materialist, and he tries to give a material magnitude to memorable places; but God chooses any common spot for the cradle of a mighty incident, or the home of a mighty spirit." "Twenty years ago," says the writer from whom we have just quoted, "Some English voyagers were standing on a flat beach within the Arctic Seas. From the excitement of their looks, the avidity with which they gazed into the ground, and the enthusiasm with which they looked around them, it was evident that they deemed it a spot of singular interest. But anything outwardly less interesting you could hardly imagine. On the one side, the coast retreated in low and wintry ridges; and on the other, a pale ocean bore its icy freight beneath a watery sky; whilst under the travellers' feet lay neither bars of gold nor a gravel of gems, but blocks of unsightly limestone. Yet it was the centre of one of nature's greatest mysteries. It was the reward of years of adventure and hardship; it was the answer to the long aspirations and efforts of science—it was the Magnetic Pole. The travellers grudged that a place so important should appear so tame. Bethlehem was "little among the thousands of Judah" in its palmiest days, and it has not advanced in civic greatness since; yet one of the most celebrated spots of which the world is proud. While yet without its village, it had a hallowed name in Hebrew story as the birth-place of Benjamin and the burial-place of Rachel. There were the fields of Boaz, where Ruth gleaned behind the reapers amidst the golden sheaves. There Jesse held his patrimony, and in his dwelling was the nativity of the minstrel king. There was anointed the man after God's own heart to be the king of Israel, by which his native village was made the mother of a long line of princes. Here halted

the star that had guided eastern sages to behold the King of kings. And behind the khan, in one of the oxen's stalls, a wayfaring woman "brought forth her first-born son, because there was no room for her in the inn;" and in that babe of Bethlehem the incarnate God was manifest. Many have gone far to behold this sacred spot, and have lingered devoutly over its scenes as they recalled the glorious events of which it has been the theatre. 2. Samuel had felt it hard to bow to the decree of God, and sorrowed so much as to receive a rebuke—the only one recorded as spoken by God to him. He was reluctant to go to Bethlehem even after his commission. He "shrunk from this task, which added all that was wanting to confirm the doom of Saul. He sought to shun the duty by expressing apprehensions for his safety should Saul hear of the transaction." "How can I go? If Saul hear it he will kill me." This was a question of inquiry, perhaps, rather than of distrust—a question such as Manoah put regarding the angelic visitant to his wife, and such as the Virgin Mary proposed when she asked regarding the unparalleled annunciation which Gabriel had made to her. Samuel sought counsel from the Lord in his extremity, that he might be enabled to fulfil the Divine command. It was not that he shrank from duty, however trying, but that his way might be opened up for its discharge. God suggested a way: "And the Lord said, take an heifer with thee, and say. I am come to sacrifice to the Lord. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do; and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee." This removed the great difficulty, and guaranteed Divine wisdom to direct his conduct. How safely might he go when he had the counsel of God—when he was assured of strength and wisdom according to his day! It is ever thus with obedient faith in following the path of duty. The believer may go on, when he has the word of God to encourage him. The Lord opened up Samuel's way by suggesting an exercise that concealed his chief object. He was to take a heifer with him, and call Jesse to the sacrifice and feast. This seems to have been not an unusual occurrence. A similar occasion took place when Saul was first apprised of the kingly dignity awaiting him. It was quite an event in Bethlehem that the venerable prophet should be there. The people held him in very high esteem, and felt an awe upon their spirits in his presence. His was entirely, so far as they were concerned, a religious errand. He declared his purpose thus:—"I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord; sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." So Samuel desired the purification of the sanctuary to be passed by those that joined with him in the sacred ordinance. They were to wash their clothes—indicative of the spiritual cleansing of the heart which is essential to the right observance of the sacrifice. Samuel assisted in the exercise. He performed for them the priestly service, as Moses did for Israel and Job for his sons. It is meet that there should be special preparation for holy services. It is true that believers are always understood to have a right to privileges; but they have not always the fitness. They may have been backsliding; their hearts may have been polluted; they may have become entangled in worldly cares. A season of preparation is, therefore, proper and useful. How solemn it makes a communion when you go from the laver to the table, and from the robing-room to the banquet-hall! How sweet it makes the fellowship when you realise acceptance, and have communion with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost! That sacrifice at Bethlehem had its joys; and its blessed influence would long be felt by Jesse and his sons. But ere they sat down to feast upon the offered victim, Samuel had another ceremony to perform. 3. He sought a special interview with the sons of Jesse, that he might set apart one of them for a high dignity in the future history of the Hebrew commonwealth. The Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. The beautiful is not always the true, nor is that real beauty which is merely outward. In man the material is superseded by the moral. The nation of highest cultivation in heathendom worshipped the beautiful to the neglect of the moral. Greek religion was æsthetic, not holy. The goodly countenance fascinates, and then too often deceives; but it is "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price." The opinions of God and those of men are much contrasted here. "The Lord looketh on the heart." Solemn thought! He knoweth fully all that characterises the inward and spiritual nature of man. The quaint, but spiritually-minded John Berridge thus wrote of

his heart: "O heart, heart, what art thou? A mass of fooleries and absurdities, the vainest, craftiest, wickedest, foolishhest thing in nature." Beholding himself in the mirror of God's word, his opinion agreed with that of God. David must have had a similar view of his when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." 4. The man after God's heart at last was found! The captain of the people of God, who would fulfil in his rule all the will of God, was selected. The great type and the earthly progenitor of the Messianic King, and the pledge of Israel's greatness, stood out before the prophet's eye. Samuel's grief was assuaged. We are thus introduced to one whose personal history and typical character are of undying interest to the Church of God. Genius was born with this son of Jesse. Music and poetry were a part of his nature, and received a high development from his ardent cultivation. His harp often beguiled the loitering day or the weary night, as he watched his flocks; and, when a minstrel was sought to soothe by melodious sounds the agitated mind of Saul, whom God's spirit forsook, the young Bethlehemite was made musician to the king. David was a poet, and sang his own Hebrew melodies to his tuneful harp. He was godly, and dedicated his music to the praise of Jehovah. He was profoundly acquainted with the word of God, and while setting many of its heroes of faith and events of grace to music, he was permitted to add largely to the volume of inspiration. Samuel rejoiced in David on the day of his anointing, though he saw not yet all things put under him. In like manner may the believer rejoice in the Son of David and the Son of God, though he sees not yet all things put under His feet. We have a pledge of his future government of all things after God's own heart in what He has already done. (*R. Steel.*)

Ver. 7. Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature.—*God's estimate of human availability*:—This enunciation of one fixed principle in the Divine government is of immense value as having a practical bearing upon all the mighty relations which each man sustains to his Maker. I. **LET US TRY TO ANALYSE THE STATEMENT ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, TO BEGIN WITH.** The Lord does not look upon the outward appearance in fixing His judgment of any human soul. It so happens that this very narrative actually specifies many of those particulars which men are wont to regard as highest in value. 1. For example, the Lord does not look upon one's social rank. The family of Jesse had no conspicuousness or remarkableness, as the world reckons. Moreover, David was the one that made it royal, and when he was chosen he was by no means the head of it. Good Lady Huntingdon used to say she thanked God for the letter M, for he did not tell Paul to say "not any," but "not many." Now it is certainly true that the best part of the world's highest worth has risen from what would by some be called its lowest sources. It is usual to sneer at the plebeian birth of Oliver Cromwell as well as that of Napoleon Bonaparte; but this had nothing to do with any vices they displayed or any virtues they possessed. These men were kings of other men by reason of a manhood which Charles the First never got from the contemptible Stuarts, nor Louis the Sixteenth from the more contemptible Bourbons. The pride of rank is prone to run into an extreme of superciliousness, of self-seeking, and of oppression. Cornelius Agrippa actually institutes an argument to prove that there was "never a nobility which had not a wicked beginning." 2. Furthermore, the Lord does not look upon one's family history. The lineage of Jesse, Obed, and Ruth was quite humble in its origin. David's mother is not even mentioned by name in the Scriptures. It is pitifully mean and conceited for anyone to set himself up as meritorious because his family once had a hero among its members. 3. Again, the Lord does not look upon one's fortune. If anyone supposes that the wealth of the "rich kinsman" Boaz had come down by inheritance into this family estate, we are surely without hint that the property had anything to do with the lot of the shepherd-boy David. 4. Nor does the Lord look upon one's appearance. It is interesting to notice that in the margin of our English Bibles the words in the seventh verse of this chapter, "the outward appearance," are rendered more literally "the eyes;" and also the words in the twelfth verse, "a beautiful countenance," are rendered "fair of eyes." That is to say, David is not chosen for his good looks, nor is Eliab rejected because of his; they may both have had fine eyes, but the Lord doth not regard such things in His selection of men for high service of Himself. John Milton was blind, and Thomas Carlyle was not considered attractive in showy company. Paul was diminutive and half blind, in bodily presence weak and in

speech contemptible; "but," says Chrysostom, "this man of three cubits' height became tall enough to touch the third heaven." 5. Once more: the Lord does not look upon one's age in making His choice of men. He sometimes selects children, and then trains them at His will. Polycarp was converted at nine years of age, Matthew Henry at eleven, President Edwards at seven, Robert Hall at twelve, and Isaac Watts at nine. God chooses His best workers often in the beginning of their intelligent existence; they that seek Him early are sure to find Him. II. TURN TO THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE STATEMENT CONCERNING THE DIVINE CHOICE OF MEN. The Lord does not look upon the outward appearance: what does he look upon? What is meant here by the word "heart?" "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." It is not necessary that we try to be abstruse and philosophical in giving an interpretation to this familiar word "heart." The entire nature of the individual is brought into view. III. IN A SOBER REVIEW OF WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID, IT SEEMS AS IF THERE MIGHT BE WISDOM IN PICTURING OUR OWN LIVES FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IN HOLDING THEM OUT BEFORE CAREFUL AND DISCRIMINATING ANALYSIS. Then we can put some fair questions. 1. For example, this: Do we hope for God's favour on the ground of a long line of personal recommendations? Some there are who conceive of their advantages as far higher than those of others, although many men with whom they compare themselves are on much superior elevations both in experience and in communion with God. 2. Then again: this subject leads us to inquire whether our personal salvation is to be settled by what the world around us thinks about our showy piety, or by what the Lord Himself thinks. There is an outward sanctimoniousness which looks very like sanctity: will it all end the same way? 3. Finally, in view of this subject, there would follow this question: How much of what worldlings prize will vanish when the Lord makes known His register of actual worth? Calmly does that eye of God keep gazing down upon men: it registers us all justly; and that estimate will stand for ever undisturbed. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *Outward appearance*:—Men of the world worship outward beauty, but if they find it nothing more than an appearance without a reality in manner and deed, it soon tires them. An old writer compares beauty to an almanac; if it last more than a year it is a marvel. Men weary of that beauty which is nothing more than an ornamental show. A modern writer aptly says that "the highest beauty is the expression of an honest heart and a sweet disposition." There is a flower known by the name of "Imperial Crown," which is admired on account of its showy appearance, but you throw it away because of its unpleasant perfume. The Lord values men and women, not by their diamonds, their gold, their carriages, and their titles, but by the purity of their heart and the helpfulness of their disposition. In God's mind, there is no distinction of plebeians and aristocracy. The only nobility God recognises is the truth of the heart, and the goodness of the life. 1. God has created us in order that we may acquire true beauty. If we are honest, we shall admit that in heart we are not beautiful. The New Testament confirms this; but the gospel is good news, revealing that every man may be transformed into the children of light by the indwelling of the beautiful spirit of God. When governed by the new nature, which God gives to every one that asks, all mankind shall become beautiful. He is still a man, but he has received the nature of a God. Do you think God sent you into the world only to stitch at that machine, or to go up a ladder with bricks, or to sweep that gutter? He sent you into the world to be made a beautiful being, with a holy character, a sweet disposition, an angelic life. Let us live for our high destiny. Do not be troubled though it takes many years to grow beautiful. 2. If we would be beautiful in the sight of God, and exhibit this character to our fellow-men, we must learn His will, and do it, and on no account grieve Him. 3. Another foundation for a beautiful character is that you are not only to love God, but also love your fellow-men. If you would be beautiful in your life, you must copy the disposition of Jesus, Who lived for one great object, namely, to bless and save mankind. (W. Birch.) **Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.**—*God's estimate of human character*:—1. GOD'S PURPOSE CLAIMS A SPECIFIC DIRECTION: the "Lord looketh on the heart." What does this mean? David's own understanding of the examination through which he in company with his brothers passed in this instance comes to view afterward in the rehearsal of one of his historic Psalms for the temple use: "The Lord shall judge the people: judge me, O Lord, according to my

righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me." The chief of all the words he here employs is "integrity:" this he accepts cordially for himself and repeats with equal candour for the aid of others. Now we know that the word "integrity" is derived from the Latin integer; and the meaning of integer is "whole;" and wholeness is our old strong Saxon for holiness. That is to say, what God means by stating that He looks upon, not the outside of a man, but his "heart," is, that He considers the wholeness of one's nature, and desires it to become holiness. He looks at each man through and through, and registers him by his soundness, his genuineness, his entire character. II. **GOD'S PURPOSE ERECTS A FIXED STANDARD.** A man's "heart," as thus understood in the religious sense and as worthy of the Divine regard, depends upon the thoroughness with which the man adjusts each exertion of his will to the Divine will. That is to say, God's heart is the test of man's heart, God's wish, God's plan, God's purpose—in a single word, God's law—showing the perfect standard. III. **GOD'S PURPOSE STARTS A PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN A HUMAN CHARACTER.** The most interesting verse in this narrative, as well as the most valuable, is that which announces how "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." It is wonderful to think of these changes now wrought upon this anointed stripling. Henceforth he is to be the shepherd of Israel; so he continues to manage his father's flocks a while longer, in order that he may learn the shepherd's duty. Henceforth he is to be the sweet singer of Israel; so he lingers out under Bethlehem sunsets and Syrian stars, in order that he may seek poetic images a while longer for some additional Psalms. Henceforth he is to be the monarch of Israel; so he is led a while longer among fierce outlaw experiences, consorting with the oppressed and the poor, in order that he may learn to understand his own subjects before he has hold of the sceptre by which he is to rule them wisely. And during this entire period this crownless king is hastening unconsciously forward in the lines of God's unflinching purpose. The Unseen One is the All-seeing One. He does not look on the outward appearance at all, save as one of His ways of knowing the man's heart. This leads to another question: What is the use of wasting years of weary life in just trying to keep up appearances before men and women and before God? Oh, how full this old world is of those who spend their time and energy in fashioning parades of unreality and hypocrisy and emptiness, not one of which is looked on by God, not one of which is respected by men! And this, too, to the neglect of the heart, upon which are grounded the decisions of present favour and future destiny. What disappointments at the day of final reckoning there will be for men and women who have fought for a title, a star, or a ribbon, in the vain hope of being looked upon because of it! What disclosures of folly, what revelations of surprise! How ignoble their aims, how empty their achievements, how absurd their ambitions, how fierce their rivalries, how useless their victories, how unimportant even their worst defeats! The call of God does not confer on any one the privilege of pride or the indulgence of haughtiness; it calls a servant to service, and kingship comes further on. It only makes a true soul more knightly and more humble to know that he has been summoned in secret into the grand purposes of God. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *The standard of God's judgment*:—I. **WE LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S JUDGMENT AND MAN'S.** God looketh on the heart; man on the outward appearance. The greatest heart, in that family beat in the humblest bosom. God saw the only kingly heart in the shepherd boy, and He made him king. So the world stands before God. He divests men of the trappings of wealth, the robes of office, the assumptions of power. These things are temporal and adventitious circumstances, mere cobwebs we have woven round us. Man looks on the face, God on the heart; man on the body, God on the soul. Man's judgment is false; God's is true. II. **THEN WE LEARN THAT APPEARANCES ARE OFTEN DECEITFUL.** Our race has had bitter lessons of this truth. Our first parents learned that the glittering folds of the serpent only covered the malignant spirit of the devil. How often have we learned "one may smile and smile and be a villain." I remember that the grandest man I saw in the war, grand in the splendour of his military equipment, was an ignorant and presumptuous corporal; and the plainest and most unpretentious man was the greatest general. In the Saviour's time the most pretentious men, who "thanked God they were not like other men," were the Pharisees, who paraded their virtue and advertised their pride before the ignorant and astonished multitude. III. **WE LEARN THAT HONOUR BELONGS TO NO STATION.** This man was a shepherd. His

brothers were warriors. God put the shepherd over the soldiers. When He would select a man to write the immortal "Pilgrim's Progress," where did he find him? A noble from the English court? A professor from the Oxford faculty? No; but a tinker from Bedfordshire. Here is his own description of himself: "I was of low and inconsiderable generation; my father's house being of that rank that was meanest and most despised of all families in the land. I never went to school to Aristotle or Plato, but was brought up in my father's house in a very mean condition among a company of poor countrymen." James A. Froude says of this man: "This is the account given of himself and his origin by a man whose writings have, for two centuries, affected the spiritual condition of the English race, in every part of the world, more powerfully than any other book or books except the Bible." God saw the heart of a kingly man beneath the tinker's coat of John Bunyan. Do you wonder at the astonishment of the people when a poor peasant stood up in the synagogue in his own village and said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." Do you wonder that they said, "Is not this a carpenter, the son of a carpenter?" That is the language of men.

IV. FINALLY, LET US BE CONTENT WITH AN HUMBLE STATION. David's life is an illustrious example of this. He was, doubtless, never so happy or contented as when following his father's sheep over Judea's hills. His greater honours only brought him greater cares and greater sorrows. Then let us learn humility and contentment in our lot. (*E. O. Guerrant, D.D.*) *The imperfection of human insight*:—From the outset of David's life, then, we may draw three important conclusions. First, that God makes choice of those to inherit His best blessings whose hearts He knows to be right. Secondly, to be very cautious in our opinions concerning ourselves. Thirdly, to be equally circumspect in our judgments concerning others. I. First of all it is to be observed, that, when the Scriptures speak of persons as ordained and predestinated to future blessings, it is ONLY EITHER BECAUSE THEIR LIVES AND CONVERSATION ARE PLEASING TO GOD, OR, IF NOT SO, BECAUSE HE FOREKNOWS THAT THEY WILL AFTERWARDS PROVE SO. When it is said of Abraham that "he shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him;" a reason immediately follows: "For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment." When the honour of giving existence to John the Baptist is bestowed on Zacharias and Elizabeth, the sacred historian takes pains to inform us that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." When Cornelius was chosen to be the first-fruits of the Gentile harvest, we are told: "He was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." The case of St. Paul, which is ordinarily brought forward as an especial proof of God's arbitrary selection, is, indeed, a confirmation of what we are now saying. The heart of Paul was especially adapted for receiving, embracing, and diffusing the mercies of the Gospel. Man, who looked on the outward appearance, judged otherwise;—Ananias, who knew him only by the fame of his persecutions, would remonstrate with God: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy name." But the Lord replied as he did to Samuel; he confuted the proud self-complacency of human penetration, with "go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me." Similarly in the text, the reason given for the selection of David from all the sons of Jesse is, "the Lord looketh on the heart." The Lord knew the sincerity and the piety of his intentions, and therefore, although he was despised of men, he was accepted of God. This conduct of the Lord, with respect to David, is especially important, because it is only a sample of His dealings in regard to ourselves. The Lord is now looking on the heart of every one amongst us. It should be remembered that the greatest sinner may be anxious to preserve a good reputation with the world, because without this, it would be impossible to maintain a comfortable existence: but it should also be remembered that reputation is not virtue, but only its semblance: and those who strive to obtain a good name are generally successful, since man looketh only on the outward appearance. Doubtless, a good name is a valuable possession; but we are not to suppose that we are good precisely in proportion as we are so reputed. We may act from a desire to stand well with the world, instead of a wish to approve ourselves to God. Regard not the opinion of the world as any standard of your situation in respect of God. Like Eliab,

you may win the admiration and affection of the world, and yet not be accepted by God. II. Moreover the Christian will acquire another important lesson from the text, AS REGARDS THE CONSIDERATION OF HIS OWN CONDITION. No one among us ought to esteem himself unhappily circumstanced, whatever may be his situation, or whatever his afflictions. Remember that of the sons of Jesse seven were honoured and esteemed by their father, and among men; one was neglected and despised: yet were all the former rejected by the Lord, while the poor unhonoured David was taken from the sheepfold to be a king and the ancestor of the blessed Messiah. But at the same time remember, that David was not chosen because he was despised among men, but because his heart was right towards God; poverty and lowliness of estate in themselves give us no title to the favour of God; but the poor who endeavour to do their duty in their station, and the afflicted who bear their afflictions patiently, have no reason to repine: the Lord has looked on their hearts, and pronounced concerning them. III. WHAT THE TEXT INSTRUCTS US WITH REGARD TO OUR JUDGMENTS OF OTHERS. The text shows the extreme unreasonableness, no less than wickedness of such conduct. We can only judge by outward appearance after all: Samuel, a religious man, chosen by God to be His minister and interpreter, is mistaken in his estimate of Eliab: and, after this, we must acknowledge that the wisest among us have little chance of an insight into the character of others, so long as our opinions must be guided by outward appearance. But above all, this incapability of seeing the hearts of men should restrain us from all curious speculation on the characters of those with whom we have no concern. Could we see their hearts as clearly as we can observe their outward conduct, we should still be inexcusable, as frail and fallible creatures, in passing judgment on our brethren: but, as it is, our judgments may be false as they are cruel and criminal: like Jesse, nay, like Samuel, we may despise those whom God has not despised. (*H. Thompson, M.A.*) *David anointed king*:—Samuel's grief over Saul's failure and consequent rejection seems natural. To Samuel Jehovah had first revealed the fact that Saul was to be king. Samuel had anointed him. Samuel stood sponsor for him. Between them had grown up a warm attachment, so that one ground of his grief would be the sense of personal disappointment. Then he also grieved for the nation. But even sacred and sincere grief may transgress its law and become sinful. There is a natural and healthy sorrow for what is gone, that is right. And there is a morbid and unreasonable clinging to what we cannot call back, that is wrong. There is a stubborn refusal to accept the situation, that is rebellious and wicked. Then Jehovah states the ground for this chiding: "How long wilt thou mourn? I have rejected him. . . . I have provided me a king among the sons of Jesse." Kings come and go, but the kingdom stays. God's workers appear and disappear, but His work goes on. The importance of a single individual to the success of God's work is often exaggerated. The very life of this church is said to depend on the ministrations of a certain pastor. The loss of this generous and devout layman, we are told, would kill the church. But if the rank and file are steady and faithful, the loss of a leader does not bring inevitable defeat. God provides against emergencies. At every great crisis, God speaks and says: "I have provided me a man." When the time has come for missionary work among the Gentiles, Paul is ready. When the time is ripe for the Reformation, Luther is ready. When American slavery is to be fought with words and laws and grape shot, Wendell Phillips and Lincoln and Grant are ready. Every large doorway of opportunity is filled with a large man. But back behind all emergencies God sits and waits. His great right hand is full of men, and when the hour strikes he speaks to the crisis and says: "I have provided me a king." Men who do not know God wonder at the opportune appearance of the right man at the right place and just in the nick of time. It all comes naturally and inevitably in the order of Providence. When summer comes, the beasts of the field need shade trees to protect them from the heat of the sun. But the same sun that brings the necessity for shade calls out the leaves to furnish it. There is purpose and unity in it all. The children of God never marvel at the meeting of the man and the occasion. And in this passage, one hand of God was rejecting Saul, was clearing the ground for a new and better reign; and the other was already reaching for David, anointing him king, and leading him up to the empty throne. "I have rejected, I have provided," are the two sides of the picture, the two hands of God's activity. One makes the emergency, the other makes and moves the needed man to meet it. The chief grounds for

choosing Saul, the former king, had been his physical and fighting excellence. Now in the face of this failure, which resulted from the lack of inward fitness, it was natural that Jehovah should say to Samuel: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; . . . for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Saul was selected for his outward excellence, but now a man must be chosen who has the inner qualities of faith and obedience; one who, because of that inner attachment to God may become in spite of faults and sins a "man after God's own heart." The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Jehovah is not simply asserting his keener judgment, but that his seeing is bent on different objects. It goes for the inwardness of things. And it is important that God's children should have firm hold of this same canon of judgment—not the outward, but the heart. It is a valuable principle in judging individual men and in judging wide movements of men. Some proposed social or industrial reform may wear an attractive outward appearance, but we are to look to the real inwardness, the heart of it. In the last analysis what will it do for the spirit of man, for the man who lives in and back of all the outward prosperity and adversity with which the reform deals? The purpose of society is not so much to get the bodies of men well fed, well housed, well clothed, as to make men. And you can only make men as you get down to where the man lives, where the man is. Within all prosperity or adversity dwells an ethical and spiritual being, and he must be faced and provided for. And all social efforts must look at the heart and recognise that nothing but the bringing of the heart into harmony with the Divine order will secure permanent and prosperous harmony in things outward. So that, before we can anoint any movement and call it king, we look at its inwardness. Thus instructed by the spirit of the Lord as to the principle of right judgment, Samuel reviews the remaining sons of Jesse with new eyes. He realises now that we cannot put a man on the scales and weigh him or stand him against the wall and measure him and tell how much man we have. God in choosing kings and leaders breaks away from our little man-made rules of primogeniture. He ignores our petty conventionalities as to grades of honour and dishonour in kinds of honest work. His choices seem to go across lots and break down the little fences men have built along the lines of succession. The Spirit of God, which is the only anointing and ordaining power in the Church or in the world, goeth where it listeth. So in this lesson the spirit of God looked over the tops of the little objections Jesse laid in the way, on out to the fields where the last son of the family was humbly tending sheep, and recognising the royalty in him, said: "Send and fetch him: we will not sit down until he comes hither." And when David came the Lord said: "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." Here was another proof of the central thought, that the Lord seeth not as man seeth. David had done nothing kingly yet. The signs and tokens of coming royalty were not in any outward marks or deeds. He was all in the bud. But the Lord looked on the heart and saw inside of the shepherd, a king, and he knew that it only required time to make the kingliness live and grow and sit upon its throne. (C. R. Brown.) *The Divine method of judging character*:—I. IT IS EXCLUSIVELY DIVINE. It is not given to man, not given perhaps to the highest created intelligence, to peer into the depths of another spirit, and there sound all the motives and impulses of action. In sooth, man is unable to detect or ascertain all the varied forces even within himself, which prompt his own actions. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Still less able is he to penetrate into the motives of his fellow-men. II. IT IS MANIFESTLY JUST. 1. To judge from appearance would be very inaccurate judgment. (1.) Some of our external actions have no intentions at their root. They start from blind impulse, break forth from a sudden rush of passion. Such actions are scarcely ours. From a sudden gust of feeling the soul has lost its balance, and an act is performed which is regretted the moment after its execution. Surely it would be wrong to judge a man from these sudden outbreaks of impulse, the rare exceptions of his life. (2.) Actions apparently bad spring sometimes from good intentions. Saul persecuted the Church of God from good intentions. (3.) Sometimes actions apparently good have their rise in bad intentions. 2. To judge from appearance would be a very partial judgment. Suppose it were possible to catalogue all your external actions, say for one week of your existence, and then catalogue also the unembodied desires, wishes, volitions, cravings, aspirations of the soul during that week, what would be the one compared to the other? A page to a volume.

Our inner activities are incessant, varied, and almost innumerable. Therefore to judge a man by his external conduct would be a very partial judgment. From this it seems clear that God's method of judgment is after all the true method.

III. IT IS ALARMINGLY SUGGESTIVE. 1. It suggests the imperfection of the best of us in the sight of Heaven. 2. It suggests terrible revelations at the last day. 3. It suggests the necessity of a heart's renovation. (*Homilist.*) *The fallibility of human judgment*:—Here is a principle of the Divine government which is well worthy of attention; for it is put before us in direct contrast with our own natural tendencies and habits; and put before us in a way powerfully calculated to show us the fallacy and the carnality of our own mode of judging of each other. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth." Now, it is not to be supposed that man is condemned because he has not the omniscience of the Deity: it is not man's sin that he does not look at the heart; he cannot look at the heart. But the error into which Samuel fell, and into which the majority of men fall, is, a carnal readiness to form a conclusion, in a manner not delegated to them, upon inadequate grounds. It is wisdom in such a case to recognise our unfitness to form a judgment, owing to the scanty range of our knowledge: and yet we see how frequently the reverse is the case, and how, on inadequate grounds, men rush to an immediate conclusion. Samuel suffered all the testimony of his experience, founded on Saul's wilful and impenitent conduct, to be silenced by the outward personal attractions of Eliab: and though he had manifest proof of the unfitness of Saul for the throne, he did not allow himself to entertain the idea which his experience might have suggested to him, that, in this case also, a comely exterior might cover a weak understanding and a depraved heart. This, then, is the difference between the judgment of man and the judgment of God. God looks through all the motives, and forms a just and impartial judgment from all the premises before Him: man sees but little indeed; but he forms a hasty, and partial, and inferior judgment from all the evidence that is really before his eyes. The various scenes of life present unnumbered instances of the evil to which we refer. 1. WITH A VIEW, THEREFORE, TO CORRECT THIS EVIL, ALLOW ME TO ILLUSTRATE IT BY A REFERENCE TO SEVERAL FACTS OF SCRIPTURE. The Scripture supplies us with some very striking cases which exemplify this impartial judgment of the Lord. 1. The judicial decision in the garden of Eden is a remarkable instance of it. Both Adam and Eve throw the blame from themselves. But how wisely and justly does the holy Lord God discriminate between them, and so fairly apportion to each their due measure of punishment, as to leave it beyond all question that "the Lord searcheth the heart." 2. There are some striking instances in which God marks and discerns the wickedness that is unseen by man. The instance of Enoch is one of these. The ungodly men of his days had spoken hard speeches against him, and decided him and his prophecies: but, in the meantime, "Enoch walked with God;" and the eye of God was upon him, and he saw not as men seeth. 3. The history of Moses presents to us a similar instance. In his early endeavours to benefit his people, he was misunderstood; and, having interfered for their welfare at the risk of his life, he was driven by the treacherous conduct of those whom he laboured to serve, to leave the palace and seek shelter in the wilderness. But there the Lord recognised him as a chosen servant; and from hence, at length He called him to be the leader and commander of His people and the law-giver to the whole world. 4. There is a still more striking case in the mysterious dealing of God with Job. The misfortunes which burst simultaneously upon him, deceived his best friends; and, judging from outward appearances, they pronounced him a wicked man. But, in the midst of all these trials, the Lord knew him to be "a just man, one who feared God and eschewed evil;" and, in the end, He brought forth his judgment as the light and his righteousness as the noon-day. 5. We pass on to the instance of the Redeemer Himself. Our blessed Lord was regarded by the priesthood and the people as a madman and a deceiver. Men accounted Him a blasphemer; but the Lord declared that "grace and truth were in His lips." Man regarded His death as a satisfaction due to the broken law of His own nation; the Lord accounted Him the spotless victim in the cause of redeeming mercy. There never has been a more striking exemplification of the difference between the judgment of God, and that of man. 6. A similar difference of estimation, also is found with reference to the Apostles, the first preachers of Christian truth. Men thought lightly of their character. He speaks of their being regarded as "reprobates." But what in the midst of this contempt of men, is the judgment of God? "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them

that are saved, and in them that perish." They were approved by the Divine wisdom as the ministers of God, and in all their varied labours they had his testimony with them. 7. We may just glance at other instances, where those who obtain the favourable estimation of men, stood condemned before Him who searcheth the heart. This was the case with Saul, who was still honoured before the people, long after God had rejected him: with Absalom, whose personal appearance stole away the hearts of the people, and seduced the subjects of David from their rightful sovereign: with Nebuchadnezzar, who, walking in his pride, commanded the adoration of the people to a golden image, which he blasphemously set up to represent himself: and the Lord doomed him seven years to a degraded condition in the wilderness. It was the case also with Herod, who, while the people cried, seduced by his oratory, "It is the voice of a god, and not the voice of a man," was smitten by the angel of the Lord, and was eaten of worms, because he gave not the glory to God. II. WE OUGHT TO ENDEAVOUR TO PROFIT BY THESE CONSIDERATIONS: and although we cannot impart to ourselves the accuracy of full and unerring observation and judgment, yet, at least, the consideration of the circumstances in which we are placed, and of our tendency to error, ought to lead us to watch with jealousy the judgment we form. 1. In the first place, then, we should suspect the judgment that we form of the outward appearance, and the importance we are sometimes led to attach to it. Why should we estimate so highly that which is so soon to decay? Let us learn from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the destruction that wasteth at noon-day, the madness of priding ourselves on distinctions which a single hour may destroy. 2. How erroneous is the estimate that men in general are disposed to form of character. We are perpetually the slaves of our own prejudices; led by a few general blandishments, we mistake that which is faulty for that which is good, and account all that glitters gold. 3. How much deeper is our error in the defective and partial standard by which we judge ourselves; and yet we are willing to acknowledge we stand on a very different ground for judgment. Conscience brings us near to God; even we do not hear with the outward appearance. No man can so completely turn away from his inward conscience as not to know something that is passing within—something of his defects; in some measure, in fact, to look at the heart. One of the great sins of man, however, is the settled, resolute habit of looking only to external and superficial merits, and trying to destroy all consciousness of the future by the follies of the life that is present. 4. Consider again, how this view of the dealings of God exalts the grace of redemption. "The Lord looked down from heaven," we are told; and when he saw there was none righteous—no, not one, then His own arm brought salvation. He knew the amount of the evil that was in the creature He determined to redeem, or the remedy would not have been adequate. But what a thought it is that the Lord should so provide for the cure of sin in all its disgusting forms, and, in His pity, should blot it out for ever by the blood of His own Son! It is almost inconceivable that such a price should be paid for such a race and nothing but such evidence as God has vouchsafed, could make us believe it. 5. "The Lord looketh at the heart." If His inspection is such at all times, how much more solemn is the thought of His coming, when He shall judge the secrets of men's hearts at the last day! (*E. Craig, A.M.*) *Judgments, Human and Divine*:—Admiration for physical height and bulk natural to warlike peoples. Regarded by them as indispensable qualification for leadership. Thus Herodotus tells us that the Ethiopians "confer the sovereignty upon the man whom they consider to be of the largest stature, and to possess strength proportionable to his size." And again, after stating that the armies of Xerxes numbered more than five millions of men, he continues: "But of so many myriads, not one of them, for beauty and stature, was more entitled than Xerxes himself to possess the power." Saul then was just the kind of man to fulfil such conditions as these. "From his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." Nor was he deficient in other qualities, courage for instance, such as would recommend him to a bold and warlike people. But in judgment he was lacking, and in action self-willed. The malady which came upon him during his later life was the fit precursor of his tragic end. His sun set in darkness and in blood upon the mountains of Gilboa. The gloom of Saul's closing years had been deepened by the knowledge that he had been superseded by the Divine decree, and that as he had been the first so he was to be the last of his family to occupy the throne. Some years before the death of Saul, Samuel had been sent to Bethlehem to

anoint one of the sons of Jesse king in his room. We must not however suppose, because David was chosen by Him Who "looketh not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart," that he was not well-favoured and attractive. Physical beauty even, if more than skin deep, if it result from the shining through the windows of the beautiful tenant within the house, is and always has been a great moral force in the world. The thing to be noted, however, is that while these attractions were well fitted to be the handmaids and helpers of the internal qualities which the fair young shepherd-boy possessed, it was not on account of his graces of form and feature that the Lord "chose David His servant, and took him from the sheep folds," etc. (Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71.) The principle on which the selection was made is clearly indicated in the words, "The Lord looketh on the heart." What was there in the heart of David to commend him? There was that in the heart of David which in some way or other rendered applicable to him the designation which was thus prophetically given him, and which has clung to him ever since. "Saul had been man's man, David was to be God's man." And yet rash and sinful though Saul was we do not find that he descended to such depths of wickedness as those which David, in his later history, fathomed. We encounter something like the same difficulty here as we are familiar with in the matter of the Divine preference, shall I say? of Jacob to Esau (Malachi i. 2, 3; Romans ix. 13). Naturally Esau's was the more generous and open nature, just as there are magnanimous traits in the character of Saul which it would not be easy to find so prominent in the disposition of David. But the truth is that, both in Jacob and in David, with all their faults and failings, there were aspirations after goodness, which were altogether foreign to the natures of the two men with whom, on the page of history, they stand contrasted. We cannot imagine Esau occupying the place, or undergoing the experience of Jacob at Peniel. Neither can we think of Saul as the author of such outpourings of "a broken and a contrite spirit" as the penitential psalms. And one of the best answers that can be given to the question, How comes it that such an one as David could be spoken of as "a man after God's own heart?" is to be found in such words as those of Thomas Carlyle on the subject. The text then presents us with a contrast between human judgments and the Divine judgment of men and things. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth," for "Man looketh on the outward appearance." I. HERE WE HAVE THE SECRET OF THE IMPERFECTION, THE NECESSARY IMPERFECTION OF HUMAN JUDGMENTS. 1. The "outward appearance" may lead us to over estimate the values of things. In small things and in great we are to a large extent at the mercy of the impressions made upon us through the senses. How slow we are to learn that an attractive exterior may conceal a false and faithless heart; that the value of a deed depends not upon the scale on which it was done, but upon the motive which inspired it; that the only true greatness, whether of men or of actions, is that which is moral and spiritual. 2. But, on the other hand, we must also remember that we may easily be led by the "outward appearance" to the undervaluing of men's motives and characters. There are a hundred and one facts which ought to be taken into the account before a perfect judgment of any man can be formed, facts of which his fellow men are, and must be, largely ignorant. Again, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth," for "The Lord looketh on the heart." II. WHILE OUR JUDGMENTS MUST BE PARTIAL AND IMPERFECT BECAUSE OUR KNOWLEDGE IS SO LIMITED, THERE IS ONE WHO KNOWS. The features in any man's life and character, our ignorance of which disables us from appraising at their proper worth his words and actions, are all known to God: the hereditary bias towards some form of evil which has made his life a continual battle-field; the educational influences which surrounded him in early youth, and which have necessarily done so much to make him, for good or evil, what he is to-day; all these and many other factors in the problem which every human life presents, are fully known to Him. III. THIS GREAT AND SOLEMN TRUTH YIELDS US TWO LESSONS:—1. One of warning. We may impose upon our fellow-men, and even delude ourselves, but we can never deceive God. 2. One of consolation and encouragement for all who have been made the victims of the slander and misrepresentation of their fellows, etc. What does He see when He looks upon your heart and mine? (F. R. Bailey.) *Deceptiveness of appearance*:—Were men to be guided by the appearance of things only, in forming their judgment, how erroneous and deceptive would it be! The sun would be no more than a few miles distant and a few inches in diameter; the moon would be a span wide and half a mile away; the

stars would be little sparks glistening in the atmosphere; the earth would be a plain, bounded by the horizon a few miles from us; the sun would travel and the earth stand still; nature would be dead in winter and only alive in summer; men would sometimes be women and women men; truth would often be error and error truth; honest men would be rogues and rogues honest men; piety would be wickedness and wickedness piety. In fine, there is scarcely any rule so deceptive as the rule of appearance; and there are multitudes who, in many things, have no other rule by which they form their judgment. Hence the errors of their speech and life; the ridicule and blunders into which they plunge themselves before the world. If appearance were the only rule of judging, what would you say of Jesus in His humble birth; in His lowly training; in His fasting and temptation; in His servant-form; in His persecutions from the people; in His poor disciples; in His bloody sweat; in His base trial; His mock kingship; His ascent up Calvary; His crucifixion with two thieves; His dying exclamation? What would you say of Christianity as the religion of this Man and His poor Apostles? But you are not to judge Jesus and His religion by the appearance, any more than nature and man. *The Lord's choice*:—The world loves that which strikes the eye, something or somebody who is imposing in appearance, and who makes an impression. How far is this from the thought of God! He would not have a repetition of Saul. It was just because Jesus had "no beauty"—according to the eyes of men—"that they should desire Him," that the people of Israel despised and rejected Him. They wanted one whose pomp would vie with the court of Rome. They wanted one who should resist evil; one who should value earthly glory; another Solomon. And they saw a Man coming from the carpenter's shop, meek and lowly in heart, associating with the very poorest, touching the leper, allowing the vilest of women to weep over His feet, eating with publicans and sinners: One whose only might was over sin, sickness, sorrow, and death. And they despised His meekness and poverty of spirit; there was nothing in Him that the world could pride itself upon; so they cast Him out and crucified Him. (*M. Baxter*.) **The Lord looketh on the heart.**—*The life of the heart*:—Judge not realities by appearances. Let me point out to you a most thriving and prosperous man, whose case will explain exactly what I mean. There is no question that in trade he is very successful. He drives into town every morning as well? Yes. And generally has a flower in his button-hole? Yes. His name is seldom seen on a subscription list, and he makes but a poor figure amongst the charities which are popular in the circle in which he moves. He is called stingy and mean: people say sharp things about him when his back is turned. You saw him putting down five pounds just now, and you thought the figure looked shabby without a cypher at the end of it; but you don't know that last year he paid a thousand pounds of his father's debts, for his father, though an honourable man, had been ruined in business; nor do you know that only this morning, on which he gave the despised five pounds, he sent a cheque for fifty guineas to his two sisters, and that he sends them a cheque of the same value four times in the course of every year; nor do you know that he is paying for the education of two brothers, and that he is laying by what he can afford to give them a nice start when they are ready for business. Judge not, that ye be not judged! The Lord looketh on the heart! There is another side to this picture. Here is a fine dashing fellow, who is the charm of every circle into which he enters. A free-handed, genial, sparkling man. Many a ten-pound note he gives away; many a subscription list he nobly leads. Wherever he is known he is praised as a charitable man. Could you have heard as I have heard him, your feelings would undergo no trifling change. I have heard his words in secret, and seen his face when the true expression of the soul was upon it. "Why not lessen your expenses?" said a confidential friend. "Appearances," he sternly replied, "must be kept up. We must get money somehow. What securities have we in hand? Mortgage them, sell them, do what you like with them—only get me what money I want." He must keep the blacking on his boots and the nap on his hat, for if he fail in surface he will fail altogether. He is made up of surface. A pin point could scratch it off. So let him beware, for a touch may topple him over into his own place. Man has a heart-life as well as a hand-life. It is upon the heart-life that God looks, and upon it that He pronounces His judgment. We cannot put all that is in our heart into our hand. God knows our advantages and disadvantages, and His judgment is the result of His omniscience. There was a sharp discussion the other day in a gentleman's

kitchen. One speaker said to another, "I am ashamed of you; we ought not to be in the same house together; you are common and vulgar-looking, besides being scratched and chipped all over. Look at me; there is not a flaw upon all my surface; my beauty is admired; my place in the house is a place of honour." The other speaker was not boisterous; there was no resentment in the tone of the reply: "It is true that you are very beautiful, and that I am very common, but that is not the only difference between us. See how you are cared for; you are protected by a glass shade; you are dusted with a brush made of the softest feathers; everybody in approaching you is warned of your delicacy. It is very different with me; whenever water is wanted I am taken to the well; when servants are done with me they almost fling me down; I am used for all kinds of work; and there never was a scullery maid in the house who did not think herself good enough to speak of me with contempt." It is so with men. Some of us live under glass shades; others of us are as vessels in common wear; but we could not change places; each must do his proper work, and each will have his appropriate reward. The Lord looketh on the heart! There are two grave-stones in yonder churchyard which occasion a good deal of remark. You will be pleased to hear something about them. The first is considered a marvel of art. The marble and the granite of which it is composed are the purest that can be found, and what can exceed the brilliance of their polish? The stone tells you that it is put up to commemorate the life of the best of mothers. It was erected by her son, who resides in the chief mansion in the vicinity. He is proud of the stone. For nothing else is he known but for that stone. He has never written his name on the holy roll of charity. No poor family would miss him were he to have a similar stone put above his own head. The other stone is modest, but really good. There is not one line of pretence about it. It, too, was put up by filial piety to commemorate motherly excellence. You should hear how it is talked about by the man who owns the fine stone. He says: "I am ashamed of such men! It is true enough that he was not very well off when his mother died, but look how he has got on since! Why, he must be worth some thousands a year. I wonder he is not ashamed of himself, to let that thing stand there—he should take it up and put another in its place. I don't know how men can do such mean things." And having so said he walks towards his own stone, and heaves a sigh that has meaning in it. And how about that other son? Thus! He never allows a poor woman to go from his door without help, because her presence reminds him of what his own mother used to be in the days of her poverty, and never does he give the help without saying in his heart: "Sacred to the memory of my dear mother." He never sees a poor woman go along the road but he looks after her and says: "Once my mother was very much like that, and for her sake I must do something for this poor creature." It is in this way that he sets up his grave-stones; in this way that he honours his mother. He says nothing about it. He writes epitaphs on hearts, not on stones; and though he is misjudged by man there is One who makes an imperishable record of his love—for the Lord looketh on the heart! 1. The Lord looketh on the heart,—This must be terrible news to a bad man. 2. The Lord looketh on the heart,—This is the joy of all men who live in truth. 3. The Lord looketh on the heart,—Then man's supreme concern should bear upon his spiritual life. Fool is he who filters the stream when he might purify the fountain. How is it with our hearts? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Man's heart under God's eye*:—The man who simply looks at himself in the light of the opinions which his fellow men form of him, is in imminent danger of making fatal mistakes. The man who even looks at himself in the light of the favourable judgment which the Church of Christ may form of him, is in a most dangerous position. But no man is in this danger who has formed the habit of always judging of himself, as he appears to himself when he stands face to face, if I may use this phrase, with God. The reason of our mistakes upon most subjects is, that we have too much fellowship about them with God's erring creatures, and too little communion with Himself. I. **GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE.** It is—1. Immediate and direct. His acquaintance with us men is not through outward appearance; it is not in any sense by the outward; He looketh on the heart. The body does not intercept His vision. The body is not even a medium. He sees the body, and knows the body as perfectly as He knows the spirit. He is not dependent on our words for His knowledge of sin. He is not dependent upon our actions for knowledge of us, neither upon our history. He has no informant. God's knowledge of human

nature is not second-hand or inferential, but immediate and direct. 2. Being immediate and direct, God's knowledge of man is perfect. His eye is upon your thoughts and your thinkings. His eye is upon your reason and upon your reasonings. His eye is upon the emotional part of your nature, and the rising and falling of your emotional susceptibilities. Sin, while being conceived, He sees. 3. Because God's knowledge is direct and perfect it surpasses men's knowledge of each other, and of themselves. It surpasses what can be known by men of themselves, and of each other. Men, with reference to self-knowledge, consult their consciousness. I do not say the conscience. The word consciousness is a more general word, including a state of the entire nature; but I speak not of the state of one faculty, but rather, I repeat, of the whole being. Men consult consciousness, and they consult memory. But then, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" so that men, with relation to self-knowledge, are very often self-deceived. Now, on all these grounds, God's knowledge surpasses that knowledge of ourselves, and of each other, that is even possible to us. But yet, more, does it surpass what is actually known; because none of us, or few of us, have the knowledge of human nature, the knowledge of ourselves, or of each other, which we might have, perhaps, if we sought for it. This seems to be the doctrine of the text. II. NOW LET US CONSIDER THE LIFE LESSONS IT YIELDS. 1. The first practical thing here taught us is, the folly of permitted self-delusion. Now do not call the words permitted self-delusion, a contradiction, for they do not involve a contradiction, or, if they do, it is just one of those contradictions that we so often find in human nature. Permitted self-delusion is not uncommon in other spheres. The case of a man who, in trading, knows perfectly well that he is not solvent, but tries to believe that he is solvent, and goes on as though he were solvent, is a case of permitted self-delusion. The man does not actually face his business circumstances. I say that is a case of permitted self-delusion, and there is something very much like this in professed religious life. Men more than half know that they are not Christians, but they try to persuade themselves that they are Christians. Now the doctrine we have been looking at, or rather, the fact of God's perfect knowledge of human nature, shows the utter stupidity of all this. Delusions and deceptions with reference to character cannot continue. Just as in the spring and autumn, you have often seen the early mists dispelled by the sun, so all mists on all subjects, and especially on the character of man, will ere long be dispersed by the strong light of God's light, and every man will appear to be just what he is—exactly what he is. 2. At the same time it shows us the utter uselessness of all hypocrisy. The two things are so closely connected together that it is only for the sake of giving force to them that I can at all separate them. Say that instead of a man being thus willingly self-deceived, he wears a mask, and does not mind saying, in certain quarters, and to certain persons, that he wears a mask—how utterly useless that mask is! because the eye with which we chiefly have to do, has never rested on that mask, as on a surface; it has always gone right through it—piercing it at every point. On the mask there is the eye of a saint, and on the eye of the real face there is the eye of a lascivious, sensual sinner. But God has never been cheated by that mild saint's eye. 3. Then we learn, further, the exposed position of all our sins. But there is another view we may take of this subject, that may help us in another direction. 4. We see through God's perfect knowledge of human nature, His thorough competency to save us. Men die of diseases with which their medical attendants are unacquainted, as the best physician and surgeon would frankly acknowledge. Every day mistakes are made—unavoidably made, I say, not carelessly made. Men go down to the grave, and all about them are ignorant of what has taken them down to the tomb. Now, suppose God were in this position with reference to our sins. You see at once that He could not entirely save us. We have accustomed ourselves, therefore, really to look on God's searching the qualifications to redeem us. 5. There is another lesson we may learn here, that is, the duty of being passive under Divine discipline. Troubles may come upon you, and you may perplex yourself as to their intent. You cannot see what faults they are sent to correct. But, generally, you will find, when God chastens, there is a close connection between the sort of chastening and the fault He chastens for, so that you can tell whether the affliction be a correction—whether it be a chastening or not. But very often sorrows are sent not as chastisements. And they are sent for what purpose? They are sent to prevent sin; not to correct

you for sin already committed, but to prevent you committing some sin. 6. And we see, the reasonableness of our acting on God's judgment of men. Do let us look upon mankind, brethren, with the light of God's Word about men. You will find here, in the truth of the text, an antidote for disquiet under misconception and misrepresentation; a motive to diligence in keeping the heart. And you will learn, further, the advantageous position of Him who is now our Lord and Master, and Who will come to be our Judge. Let us just recognise our ignorance even of our own nature. There is a sort of rebuke here, or if not a rebuke, God points with His finger at our limited knowledge. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth." That implies that we do not see all; we see only in part; we see only imperfectly. Let us recognise the limit of our knowledge, let us recognise the fact that we do not, except as we see ourselves, in light of God's light, see our own real hearts, and that we are not in a position, alone, even to understand ourselves. Let us apply this rule in judgment of our fellow men, cherishing, at the same time, if we be God's children, a child-like trust in God's knowledge. I see nothing terrible in this truth if a man be sincere. I see everything terrible in it if a man be willing to deceive himself, or if a man be a hypocrite. (*Samuel Martin.*) *God looketh on the heart*:—God does not judge of the heart by the actions, but of the actions by the heart. In His sight the stream of our conduct is pure or impure according to the state of the heart—the fountain of action: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." I. THAT IT IS THE EXCLUSIVE PREROGATIVE OF GOD TO LOOK UPON THE HEART. The heart is covered with an impenetrable veil, through which no eye can pierce; it is a field of operation into which we cannot look. Within its secret recesses the meanest feelings are fostered, and the most generous purposes rise unnoticed and unknown. The knowledge of the human heart is, in fact, a portion of the experimental philosophy, and is only to be acquired by a careful investigation of facts. It is a solemn consideration, but it is possible that our hearts may be filled with enmity or love to the Creator, our minds may be essentially carnal or spiritual, while our nearest earthly friend is wholly ignorant of the relation in which we stand to the eternal world. Were our most intimate friend, to endeavour to unbosom his mind to us, with how little would he make us acquainted; how much must there ever remain wrapt in obscurity, and in all the darkness of secrecy! All we know of the hearts of others is what they are pleased to tell us; but we are frequently deceived; our confidence is often betrayed, and we receive the thrust of an enemy through the professions of a friend. We are not even free from deception and mistake if we turn to our own hearts. We very frequently persuade ourselves that we are actuated by right motives, whilst a secret principle of selfishness is contaminating the fountain of action. The Lord looketh on the heart, not as implying a curious search, arising from previous ignorance. It is said of the angels concerning the mysteries of redemption, that they desire to look into them, but there are no secrets with the Divine Being. When it is said that "God looketh on the heart," it is implied that He regards the state of the heart: it is not an inoperative knowledge, a passive contemplation, but an influential regard in opposition to the procedure of man, who is only influenced by the outward appearance. The state of the heart is not a matter of indifference to Him, but His watchful eyes are ever engaged in a vigilant inspection of human spirits. No barriers can interrupt His view. He marked the sin of Achan when his covetousness was excited by the wedge of gold, and the Babylonish garment; He detected the same sin when Gehazi robbed Naaman, and lied unto the prophet, and he exposed the guilt of David in the matter of Uriah. II. THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT PROCEEDS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF MY TEXT. The Lord looketh on the heart, not only in the administration of His laws, but the scheme of Providence in all its ramifications is but an adaptation of His perfections to this truth. However inscrutable His dispensations may appear to us, they are not an unmeaning exercise of power, a blind bestowment of favour, or a tyrannical infliction of pains and penalties, they are the exercise of His power according to the dictates of infinite wisdom and goodness. In selecting instruments to carry into effect these purposes of His will, the Lord looketh on the heart: He sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the family of Jesse, and ordered him to anoint one of Jesse's children, whom He would point out to him, to be king over Israel. In illustration of the same truth, we may refer you to His choice as the messenger of His grace to the Gentile world. Who would have selected the

persecutor breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church of God, to display a warmer zeal and holier courage in building up the temple he once attempted to destroy? Infinite wisdom discerned the fitness of the instrument, and consecrating it to the most hallowed purposes. Whenever the church has revived, and Zion has arisen from the dust and put on her beautiful garments, individuals have been selected eminently calculated to effect the desired object. Witness the holy energy and unconquerable perseverance of Luther. In the field of missionary labour we have a Brainerd and a Swartz, a Morrison and a Milne. The venerable Carey, whose power in acquiring languages has only been equalled by his unpretending piety, and his devotion to the sacred work of his Master, was selected by that God who looks on the heart, and was raised to a dignity and moral elevation which the grace of God could alone enable him to adorn. By the same principle God over-rules the machination of wicked, and the errors of good men, for His own glory. In the ordinary dispensations of His Providence He acknowledges the same principles of operation. He has perpetual reference to the state of the heart. He is subjecting us to a moral discipline, by which we are to be trained up for glory, and virtue, and immortality. We must not imagine that affliction is the only way by which God manifests a vigilant attention to the heart. He makes the opposite state of felicity and enjoyment a proving time. How frequently has the accumulation of wealth proved to be the touchstone of a man's character. But not only in the arrangements of our worldly affairs, but in His gracious dealings with us, the Lord looketh on the heart. The discipline to which Christians are subject, arises from the intimate acquaintance which God has with the hearts of all men.

III. WE MUST IMPROVE OUR SUBJECT, WHICH IS FULL OF INSTRUCTION. 1. It teaches us the necessity of uprightness. Does God look upon the heart? How vain will it be, then, to garnish our exterior, whilst the soul remains unclean and polluted! 2. Again, our subject teaches us the nature of all acceptable worship. God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Mere formality must ever appear hateful to Him. Where the heart is not engaged, there can be no true worship. 3. Our subject teaches us the awful condition of the impenitent sinner. He lives forgetful of God, but God is not forgetful of him. 4. Our subject is a source of encouragement to the church collectively, and to the individual believer. Are the affairs of this world managed, and the interests of the church superintended on the principle that the Lord looketh on the heart? 5. But it is not only a source of encouragement, but our text is a motive to holiness. All the dispensations of His Providence, and the operations of His grace should furnish a separate motive to purity. (*S. Summers.*)

Right-heartedness:—I. THE DIVINE SUPERIORITY TO HUMAN PREJUDICES. The prophet was misled by a mere prejudice. Very frequently the outside show, the mere accidental circumstances of personal appearance, wealth, or position, are taken as criteria of worth. Now we may observe respecting such modes of estimation:—1. That the standard is obviously false. 2. It is one of which many take advantage. Many avail themselves of this common prejudice for purposes of the darkest villany. It is the convenient cloak of the base and the hypocritical. 3. It is often the cause of great wrong. Much injustice is perpetrated through the force of this prejudice. The wicked are justified while the righteous are condemned.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE RIGHT-HEARTED BEING PREFERRED. Those whose hearts are right with God may be condemned by the world, but they may be sure of approval in His sight "who looketh on the heart." That such will ever be the case may be argued:—1. From universal conviction. False as are the principles on which men choose to act, their convictions are generally on the side of the right. The common conscience of humanity testifies to the worth of right-heartedness. 2. From the voice of revelation. The Bible is decisive in its assertion of this principle. It pronounces as with a voice of thunder, its indignant repudiation of the prejudice by which human conduct is governed, and maintains the opposite as the eternal rule of Divine preference. 3. From their own consciousness. The wrong-hearted are self-condemned, while those whose hearts are right with God enjoy a cheering consciousness of His approbation.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDING TO HEART CULTURE. It is of vital importance to have the heart made and kept right with God. How is this to be secured? 1. It can be attained only through Christ. The heart will never be right with God till it is made so through the redemptive work of Christ. 2. It requires the operation of the Holy Spirit. To obtain such views of "the truth as it is in Jesus," and such affinity for it, as shall issue in the rectification of the heart God-

ward, there must be the co-operation of the Spirit. 3. It demands the most strenuous efforts. The most strenuous efforts, on the part of man, are required to become and continue right-hearted. Learn—(1.) To value men as God values them. (2.) To consider the question, is thy heart right with God? (3.) To give greater attention to the culture of the heart. (S. A. Browning.) *Man measured from the depths*:—When in Scotland recently, I went to a very interesting place, the Observatory at Paisley. I there saw an instrument for measuring earthquakes, a seismological register. A block of stone, twenty-four solid feet in depth, was thrust into the ground; down and down it went, standing like an isolated column in the vacuum carefully preserved on every side of it. On the top a delicate instrument was poised, which actually wrote with a pencil a record of the vibrations and oscillations that were taking place in every part of the globe. Said the gentleman in charge, "If an earthquake were to take place in Japan, its motions would be written here as faithfully as though we were on the spot to measure it." "Then what about the rumble here in Paisley?" said I. "You make noises enough in your streets: would they be registered by your instrument?" "No," was the reply. "We do not trouble about vibrations on the surface. We measure from the depths." That is the way to measure—truth in the inward parts. We do not measure by a man's profession, but by what comes from the depths of his nature. (R. J. Campbell, M.A.)

Vers. 10—13. Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel.—

How God's election works:—Our subject is the choosing of a king from among the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite. This narrative shows how the choosing was done. I have a situation to offer. There is no doubt about the offer or about the gift; the only doubt lies with yourself, as of old the difficulty lay among the sons of Jesse. For what is the office of the preacher, but always to be on the errand on which Samuel went to that glen in Bethlehem of Judæa? We are ambassadors of Christ; we are here to offer to men a crown, a Kingdom that never fades away. Ah, wake up and listen! "The King has come very near to people who could have had no expectation that He would come so near, when the preacher stands before an audience in London or anywhere else. Why did not Eliab get Samuel's gift? "Ah!" says the Spirit of God, virtually, "just because he was too big; he made too big a show in the flesh, and too little a show in the spirit. And a number of us are kept from Christ, and kept out of the Kingdom, for the very same reason. If you are going to be proud and lifted up, man, you will do for the devil, and you will come to the devil's reward at the end. But the Son of God will do without you. If there is anything that God sets Himself against, it is this. "A high look is an abomination unto God;" and that is what makes me tremble for some people when I am preaching the Gospel. Unless my judgment utterly fails me, you have not a gracious look, my poor lad; it does not seem as if the humbling and subsequently elevating grace of God had ever scratched the surface of your pride. There is a veneering over you, and would to God, as your friend, I could strip that paint off! Now, will you remember that the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon the heart, and a high look and a lofty look are an abomination unto Him. He will go past us, notwithstanding all our physical inches, and all our intellectual endowment, and He will take somebody out of the gutter, lift up that soul, and show that He is beholden absolutely for nothing to pride of mental or bodily girth. But before Samuel got to David he had more to do with other sons of Jesse. In came Abinadab, the second; and he said, "Neither hath the Lord chosen thee." Then came Shamariah—he passed by and out. And seven sons of Jesse, in they came, and out they went. I. WHY DID THESE SEVEN LOSE IT? Look at that procession—and I ask, what was wrong with them? Well, I think this is it: Eliab lost it because he was too big, too much concerned with himself, too proud; he would not do. And I rather think these other sons lost it because they were away at the other extreme; while Eliab was too big, they were too small, too little. Do not go about flaunting like a peacock, drawing all eyes to yourself and your strutting. But, on the other hand, and as much on the other hand, do not be a nobody. Do not be a round O, a mere decimal; and do not be thus, because life has in it one splendid opportunity that should compel every man to be bright and eager, and on the outlook for it, as it comes within his reach. I think, too, that it is depressing to read how these seven came in and went out, when I read their names, because in the Old Testament names meant something. Names nowadays.

mean nothing; they mean less than nothing and vanity. I met, not so long ago, a poor abject creature with the glorious name of Hampden stuck upon him as a kind of sarcastic label of what he was not! So you have it here. One of these is Abinadab, and another Shammah; great names that have something noble in them, as many Hebrew names had. Yet, notwithstanding their names, there may be no more in the owners of them than a day's work, a day's whistling at the plough tail, an evening's pleasure, a night's sleep, and their wages. Oh, they sadly lost it; and it came so near to them, and it hung after all so far above their heads! For when we are going to be nobodies, God will treat us like that, and will not come and thrust upon you this salvation of yours, that cost Christ His precious blood and all the wonderful thirty years of His incarnate history here among men. They missed it because they deserved to miss it; because it would have been wasted on them. II. NOW, HOW DID DAVID GET IT? After these seven came in and went out, David's turn came! Here David came in, and he is described for us; just as Eliab was described so David is. And they sent and brought him. Now, he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look at. The Lord hath no objection to fine looks, the Lord has no objection to a fine physique, and no objection to your developing your physique, in all natural, healthy, gymnastic exercises, as far as you please and as far as you may. God never wastes Himself on nothings and nobodies. Of course, to Him be all the praise; it is He who makes us what we are. Oh, will you humbly return from the pride and conceit that are killing you, and come to God, for He will build you up on a new plan altogether. In came David; and the Spirit of God said to Samuel whenever his eyes lit on him, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." How did David get it? 1. First of all, he got it because he was there to get it. Suppose somebody had come to my father and said, "I want to choose one of your family for my situation, and I had been considered likely, and that I had been sent for, expecting to find me faithful to little things—namely, keeping crows away—but, lo, I was gone away hazel-nutting or bird-nesting, miles off! The point is this: Be faithful where you are, whatever your sphere, be diligent. And if you want the call of God in the Gospel to surely settle on your head, be on hand when the call is made. I want to say a word about non-churchgoing. Man, you are playing the devil's game, and he is winning with that trump card every time, since he got you to give up going to hear God's Gospel preachers, and since he made you think there is nothing in it. Notwithstanding all, there is the Gospel, and God is behind it, and His offer is sincere; therefore, quit your careless ways and be on hand, be in the market when the marketing in heavenly merchandise is going on. 2. David got it because he was there to get it; and, last of all, because he took it. You can imagine David being just like the rest, and saying to Samuel, "I beg to decline. Really, Samuel, you have landed upon me too suddenly; don't you see, prophet, I have no time to think of this?" I was out there keeping sheep, and I was suddenly called in; and here you are going to make me king, with all that that involves. I have no ambition that way; it is not for me; give it to Eliab"—I think they all thought Eliab was the man—"and let me go away back again." Do not take it home to think about it. The chances are—and here the parable of the sower comes in—that as surely as you go out undecided, the devil will pick your pocket of my invitation and call to come to Christ. For many of us are like the wayside hearers. "The fowls of the air came," says Christ, "and picked up the seed." Ah! this great day that came to David did bring him trouble, it did bring him suffering. He was not called to the throne, nor after that to the skies, but he was sustained, he came to the kingdom, and he came to the Eternal Kingdom in the fulness of time. There were dark days when David was hunted among the hills, when he might have said that the darkest day that ever came to him was the day when Samuel came and called him from following the sheep to be God's anointed king. But he held on to God, and God held on to him; and God justified all that He had said, and God fulfilled all that He had promised. (*John McNeill.*)

Ver. 11. **Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down till he come hither.**—*Taken from the sheep-cotes:*—The story of David opens with a dramatic contrast between the fresh hope of his young life and the rejection of the self-willed king Saul, whose course was rapidly descending towards the fatal field of Gilboa. No bad man drifts down the rapids unwarned, unwept; but the

Divine purpose cannot stay till such pitying tears are dried. Nor must we cling to the grave of the dead past, whence the Spirit of God has fled; but arise to follow as He transfers the focus of His operation from the rocky heights of Benjamin to the breezy uplands of Bethlehem, and conducts us to the house of Jesse. In the selection of every man for high office in the service of God and man, there are two sides—the Divine and the human: the election of God, and its elaboration in history; the heavenly summons, and the earthly answer to its ringing notes. We must consider, therefore. I. **THE ROOT OF DAVID.** Once in the prophecy by Isaiah, and twice in the Book of Revelation, our Lord is called the "Root of David." "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the Book and to loose the seven seals thereof." "I, Jesus, am the Root and the Offspring of David; the Bright, the Morning Star." The idea suggested is of an old root, deep hidden in the earth, which sends up its green scious and sturdy stems. David's character may be considered as an emanation from the life of the Son of God before He took on Himself the nature of man, and an anticipation of what He was to be and do in the fulness of time. Jesus was the Son of David, yet in another sense He was his progenitor (Mark xii. 35—37). There are four great words about the choice of David, the last of which strikes deeply into the heart of that great mystery. 1. The Lord hath sought Him a man (I Sam. xiii. 14). No one can know the day or hour when God passes by, seeking for chosen vessels and goodly pearls. 2. I have found David my servant (Ps. lxxxix. 20). There is ecstasy in the voice, like the thrice repeated found of Luke xv. And was there not some secret glad response to the Master's call, like that which the disciples gave, when Jesus found them at their nets, and said, "Follow Me?" 3. He chose David to be His servant (Ps. lxxviii. 70). The people chose Saul; but God chose David. This made him strong. We are immovable when we touch the bed-rock of God's choice, and hear Him say, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name." 4. The Lord hath appointed him to be Prince (I Sam. xiii. 14). Saul might chafe and fret; but from amid the ruins of his waning power the authority of David emerged as a sun from a wrack of clouds, because God willed it. 5. I have provided Me a King (I Sam. xvi. 1). The Divine provision meets every need, silences every anxiety. In some unlikely quarter, in a shepherd's hut, or in an artisan's cottage, God has His prepared and appointed instrument. As yet the shaft is hidden in His quiver, in the shadow of His hand; but at the precise moment at which it will tell with the greatest effect, it will be produced and launched on the air. II. **THE STEM OF JESSE.** We turn for a moment to consider the formative influences of David's young life. David says nothing of his father, but twice speaks of his mother as "the handmaid of the Lord." From her he derived his poetic gift, his sensitive nature, his deeply religious character. To his father he was the lad that kept the sheep, whom it was not worth while to summon to the religious feast; to his mother he was David the beloved, and probably she first heard the psalms which have charmed and soothed the world. The lad may have owed something to the schools of the prophets, established by Samuel's wise prescience to maintain the knowledge of the law in Israel. They appear to have been to Israel what Iona was to the wild tribes of the North in later times. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *The shepherd foreshadowing the king:*—In the boyish days and deeds of distinguished men, biographers delight to illustrate the adage that the boy is father to the man. In sacred story, the younger child of Rebekah taking hold of his brother by the heel, as if with intent to supplant him; in classical mythology, the infant Hercules strangling in his cradle the serpents sent by Juno to destroy him; in modern history, the schoolboy Napoleon Bonaparte, rearing his snow fortifications in the play-ground, and teaching his school-fellows to attack or defend them—are samples of the shadows of the future that are often projected on the childhood of great men. The early years of King David exhibited more than one instance of this foreshadowing of the future. I. It certainly was not by accident, that, when Samuel went to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king, **THE SON ON WHOM THE DIVINE CHOICE FELL WAS AT THE VERY MOMENT KEEPING HIS FATHER'S SHEEP.** His early employment had a direct and Divine bearing upon his later. In some of his psalms—the beautiful closing verses of the 78th, for example—the Divine connection is transparent. "He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheep-folds; from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and

guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." 1. As a shepherd, keeping his father's sheep, the sense of responsibility to another was powerfully called into exercise. The flock was not his own. The servant-feeling thus beautifully called into play, was transferred, in full integrity, to the higher sphere of the kingdom. To the people of Israel he felt that he stood in the same relation as he had occupied to his father's sheep, and to God in the same place in which he had stood to his father. 2. Further, the shepherd-occupation of David led him, from its very nature, to seek the welfare of the flock. Suitable pasture had to be provided; shelter had to be found from the heat by day and from the cold by night; protection had to be secured from wolves and lions; the diseased had to be nursed, the wounded cared for, wanderers had to be followed, rescued from danger, and brought back to the fold. These were the ideas of duty with which David became familiar as a shepherd. And when his charge was changed, these ideas of duty remaining in his heart, and influencing his public conduct, made him the eminent ruler he became. The welfare of his people was his constant aim. In the view of duty to the flock, all thoughts of fear and danger fled from David's mind. Self-sacrifice for the welfare of others was the ruling principle at once of the shepherd and of the king. 3. Yet further:—In his office as a shepherd, David had constantly to study the increase and improvement of the flock. It was not enough for the shepherd to keep the flock as he got it. The flock was not properly kept, unless every season brought a great increase to its number, and a large addition to its value. The same thought manifestly influenced David's kingly administration. He constantly consulted for the progressive improvement and elevation of his people. And in all the higher departments of progress, the same spirit of improvement prevailed. Great warrior though he was, the spirit most congenial to him was that of peaceful development and progress. We cannot omit to add, that the shepherd-employment of David, by leading him to give special attention to the weak, the helpless, and the distressed of his flock, trained him for one of the most blessed and Christ-like functions of a godly ruler. What a contrast, the spirit of David's pastoral and royal office, and of Christ's blessed rule, to that of most earthly governors! What a contrast to the spirit of the well-known saying of the "most Christian king"—"L'état, c'est moi"—"I am the State! The Christian shepherd is not the flock, the Christian ruler is not the state. He is God's servant, intrusted with the rod of authority for the true good of the flock. The more forgetful he is of self, in his anxiety to discharge his trust, and do good to his flock, the more worthy is he of the title of "a Christian king." While we speak thus strongly of the devotion of King David to his own people, we must add that in its very intensity, that devotion was not unaccompanied by traces of human infirmity. His love was confined to his own people; and for all beyond that circle, he not only had no warm love, but hardly even the ordinary feelings of brotherhood. It would have been most difficult for a Jew to attain the happy medium, the right equipoise of feeling for the uncircumcised nations around, lying somewhere between brotherly love on the one hand, and bitter hatred on the other. But David gave himself no trouble to find this happy medium. It is a mystery how such tenderness, and such relentless severity, should have been found in the same man. Whatever may be urged in extenuation of his severity, rests on his position as a Jew. For our part, we must ever remember that to enlarge the sphere of kindly feeling is one of the great objects of the Christian dispensation. "Let brotherly love continue" for the members of the household, certainly; but "if ye love the brethren only, what do ye more than others?" (*W. G. Blaikie, M.A.*) *The call of David*:—David, the son of a man in humble life, and the youngest of his brethren, was chosen by Almighty God to be His special servant—to be a prophet, a king, a psalmist: he was anointed by Samuel to be all this; and in due time he was brought forward by Almighty God, and as a first act of might, slew the heathen giant Goliath. Now let us apply all this to ourselves. 1. David seemed born to live and die among his sheep. Yet God took him from the sheep-folds to make him His servant and His friend. Now this is fulfilled in the case of all Christians. They are by nature poor, and mean; but God chooses them, and brings them near unto Himself. He looks not at outward things; He chooses and decrees according to His will, and why He chooses these men, and passes over those, we know not. Here we differ from David. He was chosen above his brethren, because he was better than they. It is expressly said, that when Samuel was going to choose one of his elder brethren, God said to him, "I have

refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;" implying, that David's heart was in a better state than his brother's, whom Samuel would have chosen. But this is not our case; ye are in nowise better by nature than they whom God did not choose. God hath chosen all of us to Salvation, not for our righteousness, but for His great mercies. 2. Observe, too, God chose him, whose occupation was that of a shepherd; for He chooses not the great men of the world; He passed by the rich and noble (James ii. 5). The Angel appeared to the shepherds as they kept watch over their sheep at night. The most solitary, the most unlearned. God hears, God looks upon, God visits, God blesses, God brings to glory, if he is but "rich in faith." One person is a king and rules, another is a subject and obeys; but if both are Christians, both have in common a gift so great, that in the sight of it, the difference between ruling and obeying is as nothing. All Christians are kings in God's sight; they are kings in His unseen kingdom, in the Communion of Saints. 3. Next, observe God chose David by means of the Prophet Samuel. He did not think it enough to choose him silently, but He called him by a voice. And, in like manner, when God calls us, He does so openly. He sent His minister, the Prophet Samuel, to David; and He sends His ministers to us. 4. When Samuel had anointed David, observe what followed. "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." God's spirit did but come upon David, and visit him from time to time; but He vouchsafes to dwell within the Christian, so as to make His heart and body His temple. 5. Though David reached the gift of God's Holy Spirit, yet nothing came of it all at once. He still seemed like any other man. He went back to the sheep. The Spirit of the Lord had come upon him, yet it did not at once make him a prophet or a king. All was to come in good time, not at once. God the Holy Ghost leads on the heirs of grace marvellously. You recollect when our Saviour was baptised, "immediately the Spirit of God led Him into the wilderness." What happened one way in our Saviour's course, happens in ours also. Sooner or later that work of God is manifested, which was at first secret. 6. Lastly, then, let us inquire who is our Goliath? who is it we have to contend with? The answer is plain; the devil is our Goliath. By degrees our work comes upon us; as children we have to fight with him a little; as time goes on, the fight opens; and at length we have our great enemy marching against us with sword and spear, as Goliath came against David. And when this war has once begun, it lasts through life. (*Plain sermons by contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*) *God's choice and preparation of men:*—Samuel is the light by which young David reads the handwriting of Jehovah upon the walls of his spirit, learns his destiny, and prepares for his high calling. So the living God in His marvellous mercy hides Himself behind man, that not being overpowered by His splendours, we may be won to open our hearts to receive of His fulness and grace for grace. Who of you will be His anointing prophets this day, and go on this blessed ministry! Care you not for the future of His kingdom? Is there no David whose spirit you can fire by the out-shining of your conviction and the heat of your enthusiasm for the salvation of men? Seize your privilege, and hand on to unborn generations the gifts of vision and power the Eternal has bestowed upon you! 1. We now ask, why is it that David of all the sons of Jesse, and of all the children of Israel, is elected by the prophet for this special consecration of kingly place and power? The answer, fortunately for us, is as near as it is definite, and as simple and authoritative as it is decisive and Divine. Speaking of Eliab, God says to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." There is at once the principle of the Divine choice, and the condition of the prophetic inspiration. David has that inner consecration without which the outward anointing is an utterly unmeaning and damaging ceremony. "The unction of the Holy One" has preceded the symbolical oil of the prophet. For though God accepts and adopts human meditation as the principal avenue along which He meets the souls of men, He has many other ways of finding us besides that of a faith-begetting human presence. The Idea of God grows unawares upon our inward sight, and we are learning more and more about Him when no visible teacher is near and no human voice is heard. 2. It were, indeed, the gravest of

mistakes to regard this day of consecration as the first descent of the Spirit of the Lord on young David's heart—

"Let no man think that sudden in a minute
All is accomplished, and the work is done."

God does not anoint unprepared men for kingship. "The boy is father to the man." Not as a vaunting soldier, not even as a brave patriot, does David go forth against Goliath of Gath; "but that all the earth may know"—for the fight is a missionary's evangel, and a soldier-shepherd's "apology" for God—that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, who does not give victory to mere bulk, or even to military prowess, but to sincerity of heart; to humility, purity, and largeness of soul. Evermore God's unseen educating ministry goes forward. He is always preparing the world's kings. True rulers are never absent. We indeed see not their crowns. No sceptre is in their hands. They neither wear king's clothing, nor sit in king's houses. They are with us in our families, despised by their elder brothers, and unrecognised by all; but when the clock of time strikes, and their hour is come, they take their place and do their work, and we are debtors all. The earliest stages of regeneration are unconscious. Visibility is not the measure of reality. "The kingdom of God comes without observation." We live months and years before we talk in fluent English. We know not the day of our birth, and we cannot tell what we shall be. The issues of our acts are hidden from us. Alertness of vision, openness to receive the Spirit, will be surprised after a while by a God-sent Samuel anointing you for a higher vocation. But we are not right within. We know it. There is an aching inside us. Our sins look us full in the face. We want place rather than preparation, thrones rather than disciplined ability, glittering crowns rather than true and unfaltering obedience. We crave and pant to be thought somebody, instead of bending our whole will on being as God wills. 3. But David, we may be certain, were he guiding us, would take us another step backward in order to see the building work of God in its earlier stages; for nothing more ineradicably rooted itself in his mind, or found more pathetic expression in his songs, than the immense educational influence of his family and shepherd life. As a boy he was a keeper of sheep, and he never forgot it. The influence of that shepherd life was never exhausted. It was the salt of his career. It fed his humility and inspired his praise; purified his thinking, and sobered and deepened his emotion. It brought him face to face with reality; shut out the crowding and gossiping life of the city, threw him back on his own thoughts, gave him leisure and facility to strip off the shows of things, and get at their heart, developed an inwardness of being that brought peace and power for evermore. Thus David got his education, in the plain every-day uses of life, and was fitted for his consecration to kingship by patient, plodding, and loving service. As Moses led the sheep in the desert before he led Israel out of Egypt, as Gideon received his call to take charge of the hosts of God whilst he was threshing wheat, as the mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha at the plough, as Matthew heard the summons to the apostolate at the toll-booth, so David got his first training for his high place amid the lowly duties of his shepherd life. I suppose we shall learn some day, that the faithful doing of our actual work, the doing it for use, and not merely for gain, from love of God and love of men, is recognised by Heaven as the surest preparation for future promotion and enlarged service. Then we shall have no need to seek change of place, in order to be ready for God's prophet with his horn of anointing oil, but only "to keep our heart right." (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) *The unlikely selected*:—Dr. Isaac Barrow, when a lad, was most unpromising. Such was his misconduct, and so irreclaimable did he seem, that his father, in despair, used to say that "if it pleased God to remove any of his children, he wished it might be his son Isaac." What became of the other and more hopeful children of the worthy linen-draper, we cannot tell; but this unworthy son lived to be the happiness and pride of his father's old age, to be one of the most illustrious members of the university to which he belonged, and one of the brightest ornaments of the church of which he became a minister. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. **Arise, anoint him, for this is he.**—*The Anointed Shepherd*:—Not a few of the most impressive characters of Scriptures come before us in adult strength. Abraham, Elijah, the apostles, lived an unrecorded youth. Not so

with David. When we see him, ruddy from the fold, bow to receive the holy chrism from the hand of Samuel, he is alert with the grace and comely with the beauty of youth. Hence much of the spell his story has cast upon the young of all the ages. Now look at—I. **YOUNG DAVID'S HOME.** His mother's name is untold. But, as we might expect, she was a godly woman, "Thy handmaid," as David could say in prayer to God. His father Jesse was an old man in David's youth (1. Sam. xvii. 12). With seven brothers and two sisters, Zeruah and Abigail, he was apparently the youngest of them all. The companionship that failed him with his much-older brothers he probably found with his sisters' sons—Joab, Abishai, Asahel, and Amasa—who would be to him more like cousins than nephews. His father was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth, the Moabitess. Jesse was not like Boaz, a "mighty man of wealth." He kept no servant, as far as appears in the record. His flocks were "a few sheep." In much solitude, though one of many children, and meeting little appreciation—though surely the mother must have read some great promise in her youngest son!—grew David. To and fro, between his home and flock, he went, and the simple people of Bethlehem little imagined that he was to make their own town famous through all lands, and to be to men of all ages one of their holiest and most helpful teachers. Who can forecast the destiny of the children we meet, the children of our homes? A future is before each of them; it may be of lowly usefulness, if not of eminence. And the thought even of young David, to whom, it seems, small appreciation gathered, will give point to our Lord's solemn warning, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." II. **DAVID'S OCCUPATION.** It was that of a mountain shepherd. The shepherds of Bethlehem—which stood on a rugged ridge of the hill country of Judah with deep gorges eastward to the Dead Sea and westward to the Philistine plain—had to keep their sheep amid no ordinary difficulties. Every Syrian shepherd's life was one of exposure and privation. Alertness and courage needed in the shepherd were found in David. Much alone, toiling as humble youth among humble men, not a day but by the work of his hands, his companionships, his perils, he was being prepared to be the shepherd of a nation. And because he was faithful over a few things—feeding sheep, nursing lambs, going after the lost, fighting back the thief—God purposed to make him ruler over many things. However lowly our station and inconspicuous our toil, we are to be faithful in it. Our business may be small, but it is big enough to be faithful in. III. **DAVID'S ENDOWMENTS.** Though not of commanding stature like Saul, he was endowed with uncommon beauty. Dwelling among a dark-complexioned, black-locked people, "he was ruddy," "cherry-checked," as an old English writer calls him, or, according to the rendering of the ancient versions, auburn-haired. David was endowed with the poet-soul. The experiences of his shepherd occupation coloured many of his Psalms. The value of David's great musical and poetic gift to himself must not be overlooked. But not because of his physical beauty or poetic genius was David chosen to the throne. It was because of his true and holy character. "From a child he knew the Holy Scriptures," a portion of them consisting of but little more than the Pentateuch. His delight was in them; they were his meditation day and night. His heart was right with God. He was "glad in the Lord." With radiant piety he went to daily duty and through it. "He carolled to his fleecy care." He was not the less but the more manly for his piety. Wild beasts found in him their victor. And the violent robber retreated before this young but valiant man of war. His heart was right and so his life was right for duty or danger. The Lord looketh on the heart. Then what does He see in us? The "heart right with God" is the grand essential to all valuable and enduring service to our generation. Where God looks let us look. Let our heart be right, and then though our intentions, motives, conduct, may be questioned and maligned by men all will be well with us, God Himself will vindicate and reward us in that great day when the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed. IV. **DAVID'S ANOINTING.** When David comes before us in the sacred record it is to be anointed by aged Samuel, last and purest of the judges. Thus the obscure shepherd lad, the menial of his father's family, first meets us in history. Anointed! Did that family know the meaning of the rite? Prudential reasons would conceal it from them. Did David know? Most likely not. But he knew that God's favour was on him, and that, of some kind, a great future was before him. He was not impatient for it. He would prepare for it; by study of God's law, in which he may henceforth have received instruction from Samuel, whose home (for there

were several Ramahs) was, very likely, not many miles away; by still tending his sheep he would also prepare for it. When the great future comes it will know where to find him. In the faithful discharge of daily duties every Christian man is preparing for heaven's glorious future. He is being trained up for an eternal, if not a temporal throne. (*G. T. Coater.*) *The anointing of David*:—Samuel, the venerable and almost outworn prophet, would have made a mistake upon this occasion. When he looked upon Eliab, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." It is clear, therefore, that even inspired and honoured prophets were not, in themselves, infallible. It would further appear that their inspiration was occasionally suspended. Now and again natural judgment interposed its opinion. Now and again the natural sense spoke first, without allowing the spiritual sense to lead the way. Appearances ought to mean something. If a man have a noble physical appearance, that appearance ought to carry with it some moral significance. If it do not, the man himself should retire into his own heart, and ask himself a plain question or two. Did God fashion palaces for dwarfs? The man should inquire whether God intended that his outward nobleness of form and aspect should be inconsistent with his inner and better life? Ought not the natural to be the expression of the spiritual? Ought a man to have a noble head and nothing in it? great physical power and no power of soul? an open, beautiful countenance, yet the heart of a hypocrite or the soul of a villain? As with personal appearance, so with social appearance. Our outward figure in society ought to mean something good; something according to the measure of its greatness, and the intensity of its splendour. Shall a man live in a great house, and be surrounded by all the signs of luxury and advanced civilisation, and yet that appearance fail to denote that the inhabitant of that house and the owner of that property is a man of the noblest charity, and that what is round about him is but a poor figure and dim emblem of the reality of his spirit, and the inexhaustibleness of his love? A man ought not to feel himself at liberty to be inconsistent, to exhibit a daily discrepancy between his appearance and his reality, whether it be his personal appearance or his social appearance. On the other hand, there is a higher law. There is a law which takes us clear out of the realm of appearances. So, whilst our subject gives a call to those who are favoured with outward beauty and external majesty, it also sends a message to those who have no such physical and external advantages. It says: True beauty is beauty of the heart, true greatness is greatness of the mind, abiding majesty is moral majesty; what thou art in reality, thou art in thy soul! The bloom shall be taken off thy cheek, the lustre shall be dimmed in thine eye, the sap shall be taken out of thy bodily strength: moral elements, spiritual qualities, spiritual beauties—these survive all wrecks, these grow, these increase in lustre, beauty, and worth; these, partaking of the very nature and quality of God, shall abide through the ages of His own eternity! Turning specially to the anointing of David, we shall regard it in its bearing upon the Divine law of election, which is so mysteriously, yet so certainly and inexorably working amidst the affairs of men. Looking at that law of Divine election within the limits of the present instance, two things are plain. I. IT IS PLAIN THAT THE LAW OF DIVINE ELECTION PAYS NO REGARD TO HUMAN PREJUDICES. There is, for example, a prejudice in favour of appearance. Samuel himself was the subject of that prejudice. We may, too, have prejudices as respects age. We rightly say that age should speak, that a multitude of days should teach wisdom, that a man who has come to maturity, or grey hairs, has a right to a certain measure of supremacy. There is, too, a prejudice as regards employment. We infer that because a man has been brought up in a lowly employment, therefore he is not qualified for high rule, for supreme command. Now as Samuel had the one prejudice, Jesse had the other. Thus setting aside human prejudices, and working according to a law which never has been sanctioned by the merely natural reason of mankind. 1. By calling unlikely men to the front, God humbles human judgment. No man can arise and say, "This is the Lord's chosen one," or "That ought to be the specially honoured servant of the Most High." Not the keenest, wisest, strongest of us is entitled to say who shall be sent on the Lord's errands. We are ruled by prejudices, we are sometimes victims of appearances. We see form, not soul—hands, not hearts. We draw conclusions from things seen and temporal. God hushes all our voices, and says, "I am the Lord; I will send by whom I will send: the work is Mine, and the Master must choose the servants." God also keeps the world in constant expectation by calling unlikely

men to do the chief of His work in society. The Lord is round about us, and at any moment He may charge us with His messages, and clothe us with His power! 3. By calling unlikely men to the front, God equalises the conditions of society. Suppose for one moment that all men were called from one class. What a change would take place in our social relations! what pride would inspire some people, what despair would chill and darken others! But God is continually working by a sovereign law, which we cannot understand, but which always vindicates its own mercifulness, as well as shows its infinite wisdom. God equalises one aristocracy with another, and daily teaches us that no man is to be despised; that in the meanest of His creatures He can set up His temple, if He will! 4. See then the graciousness of the law of sovereign election. We do not speak of the majesty, the impressiveness, and sublimity of the law. But in this law of sovereign election, daily at work amidst the affairs of men, we discover infinite graciousness, beneficence, compassion. The law has not only a sublime side, but a side which appeals to our emotions, to our gratitude, to our confidence. God's strength is the measure of God's love. So had I any choice in the matter, I should prefer that God should elect to rule according to His own counsel without ever consulting me. I would pray Him to save me from consultation; I would appeal to Him not to make me a party to a decision; I would be His servant, His agent, His son. I am but an insect born yesterday. What shall I say to the eternal and infinite God? I say, "Do not ask me; do not consult me; Thou knowest all; let me find my liberty in Thy sovereignty; let me find my freedom in Thy rule; what Thou doest, infinite, living One, must be best!" II. IT IS PLAIN FROM THIS INSTANCE THAT THE LAW OF DIVINE ELECTION PROVES ITSELF IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS. We read, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." The same thing we see in the case of Saul, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came, and of whom we read, "The Lord gave him another heart." So it was with Joshua. In like manner we read that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah." So with Samson the strong man. It is of supreme importance that this side of the doctrine be understood; so that the law of Divine election may be saved from abuse. Let us understand, therefore, what we are talking about; namely, the law of Divine election vindicates itself in spiritual expression on the part of those who are divinely elected. How is a man to show his election? Not by pretension. Not by contemptuous treatment of other workers. The divinely-elected man is a magnanimous man. He rarely has recourse to contempt; when he is contemptuous, it is for moral, not for merely personal, reasons. How, then, is a man to prove that he is called of God to do a special work, or to occupy a special position? I answer, distinctly and emphatically, by the purity and force of his spiritual qualifications. Only so far as he has the Holy Ghost is he the elect servant, the representative of God! There must be something about him that is not merely physically distinctive, separating him from all other men, and giving him a bearing and force which could only be derived from long-continued fellowship with the unseen ever-living Lord! An intelligent appreciation of this law of Divine sovereign election would be attended by the happiest consequences. Life would no longer be looked upon as an irregular warfare. Lose your grasp of this doctrine of the Divine rule and the sovereign majesty of God, and life becomes a scramble on the streets; the strongest wins, the weakest is knocked to the wall; and as for the spiritual man, the soul that has not lost its sensibility, the man that has ideas of righteousness, truth, and honour—such men must be trampled in the dust. Lay hold of this doctrine, that God is at the centre, God is on the throne, marshalling all forces, and ruling all events; and how confused soever may be present appearances, you will find a law working itself out which shall justify every one who is good, vindicate every righteous claim, confound the wicked, and bear them away upon the whirlwind of Divine indignation. Not only will this result follow; but responsibility will be felt to be measurable by proper limitations. All men are not equally responsible before God. Some of us require to be comforted upon this point, because this great question of responsibility is so heavy to carry; it troubles and overweights us till we can hardly get along at all—so grievous is our sense of personal responsibility. Tell me that God gives to every man a certain number of talents—five, two, or one. Tell me that from him to whom much has been given, much will be required, and that from him to whom little has been given, little will be required; then I begin to feel the justness, the equity, and graciousness of the living Lord. You may expect me to say one word about another kind of election, or another bearing of this law of

election. Let me, then, deny, that any man is elected to badness of character. I ask you to prove, by any correct quotation from the Divine record, that God ever called a man to wickedness. The whole tone of Biblical teaching is against a theory so monstrous. I do read of election to righteousness, of calls to high offices and noble functions. I never read of God electing a man to hell! As to this matter of election, I would to God that some who object to it were as common-sense in this matter as they are in the daily actions of ordinary life! There is a prize to be given in the school. It is one prize; there are five hundred scholars in the school. The boys say, "Well, only one of us can get it, why should five hundred of us be toiling and fagging for it?" Another boy says, "I know if I am to have the prize I will get it; so I shall read no books, and make no preparation." You would not allow a boy to reason so. Yet there are men who say this, "If we are called to heaven, we'll get to heaven; if we are elected to be saved, we need not make any effort about it." "Thou wicked and slothful servant: out of thine own mouth I condemn thee;" the whole action of thy evil life shall be thy answer on the day of judgment, and thou shalt be condemned to an ignominious silence because of a self-accusing conscience. With God upon the throne, why should we be distressed by unhappy appearances and unwelcome rumours? The Lord reigneth; that is enough. The sovereignty of the Lord is the security of all goodness. Destroy sovereignty, and you inaugurate confusion. What would be our poor human life, were God to leave the throne, and allow us to go our own way, and do our own bidding? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *David, the chosen of God*:—The aged Samuel and the youthful David contrasted present a touching subject for contemplation. Samuel had weathered the storms of life for many weary years; David had scarcely commenced to fight his life-battles. Samuel was about to enter into rest; David had to live and work and fight. Samuel had one important duty to perform, and then he could lay down his weapons—that duty had reference to the youthful David. 1. The despised of man is in this case the chosen of God. It seems that David was not thought much of at home, but God valued him highly. How often has it happened that boys who have been the subjects of special care, being regarded as geniuses, have repaid the pains taken with them by running wild, and thus piercing a tender mother's and a loving father's heart; whereas, on the other hand, some who have been comparatively neglected, on account of their seeming stupidity, have turned out real heroes, the props of parents' declining years. "Many a gem" that shall sparkle brightly in the place of happiness is here unseen, and "many a flower" that shall bloom in the soil of Paradise hides its head on earth, like the "modest" violet. Poor Christians, never heed if you are slighted by purse-proud brethren. Jesus will say to you by and by, "Come up higher;" while He will say to those, "Go down lower." Every one, sooner or later, will find his proper level. Merit will be rewarded, if not in this world, in the next. As Christians, we can well afford to wait for our exaltation. 2. What sort of a youth was this David? David was a true child of nature. As "a blithesome shepherd-boy," he was always reading in her wide-extended book, which told him of the glories of the God of the Hebrews. As nature's child, he could sing with all artlessness unto nature's God. He glorified God in his own shepherd-language, as the shepherd of Israel. David's personal appearance was but the reflex of his inward beauty! where it exists it stamps its image upon the plainest countenance, and makes it lovely. David, ruddy and beautiful, was called by God; hence let us learn that God requires the young, the beautiful, to be His servants. Now, I take this picture of David to be a good type of the Church of Christ. It is certain that the ideal Christ, of which we love to think, will be "ruddy, beautiful, and goodly to look to" in all completeness, but this is in measure the appearance of the real Church of to-day. "Ruddy, and beautiful, and goodly to look to"—oh, yes! for she is baptised with the Redeemer's blood; His own image impressed upon her makes her exceedingly lovely. Do you ask "Where is the proof of her vigour?" Ten thousand proofs are at hand. On the icy plains of the far North some are found who delight in calling upon the name of the Lord. Down at the extreme South are those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Thank God, the church can never lose its youthful vigour whilst young recruits are stepping up in the ranks to supply vacancies caused by the removal of hoary warriors whose warfare is ended. 3. Let us make one or two other practical remarks on this passage. The Lord's people form a family; but there are many who, like David in the next, are not now in the family circle: many are keeping sheep

for Satan, and refuse to attend the family meal. God says, "Send and fetch them, for we will not sit down till they come hither." A great feast day is approaching, when all true worshippers shall sit down in the banqueting-house, and feast with Jesus. God wants to have a full house then. Shall Satan's dram-shops, and public-houses, and dancing-saloons be filled on earth, and the Lord's table empty in heaven? No. "Send and fetch" them in the name of God. Ages have rolled by since David departed from earth; but do no sweet sounds of David's harp still linger on the ear. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." (*A. H. Jones.*) *David under the holy horn*:—The eldest of Jesse's sons, Eliab, was the largest of them all; he was like Saul in his figure, a great, tall, broad-shouldered, magnificent-looking specimen of physical manhood. All the others in the crowd looked little and insignificant when compared to him, and when Samuel saw him he said to himself, "There is the man. Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." But the Lord made Samuel know his mistake. I remember a friend of mine telling me of a young man who was living in Boston during the years when Phillips Brooks was doing his great work there in Trinity Church. This young man was converted to Christ under Phillips Brooks' ministry, and he explained to my friend how it came about. He said the first thing that attracted him to Mr. Brooks was his giant-like physical form. He used to see him walking down the street every morning, and he said to himself, "What a man that is!" He was thinking only of the physique, and nothing else. But he so greatly admired the splendid appearance of the man that he went to hear him preach, and as he listened to his clear expositions of the Scripture and was charmed by his flights of eloquence, he began to admire the intellect of the man, and he said to himself, "What a splendid brain he has; it is equal to his body; he is a giant in intellect as well as in physique." But as he went on listening to Mr. Brooks' sermons, the Spirit of God used the word as a "two-edged sword," and he became greatly troubled because of his sins, and finally he was so troubled that he went to see Mr. Brooks, and opened his heart to him, and then the great man's tenderness of heart, and loving sympathy with him, as he cleared away his doubts, swallowed up all his previous thoughts concerning him. The young man not only came to know Jesus Christ as his Saviour, but his heart was flooded also with the knowledge that Phillips Brooks was as great in his heart and in his spiritual nature as he was in body or brain. Surely that is as it ought to be always. It is a shame for a man to be large in body and mind and little and narrow and mean in spirit. The same is true of the circumstances in which we live. When you see a man living in a large and splendid house, having about him all the evidences of abundance, you feel that out from such a house there should flow streams of benevolence. When it proves to be true it is a beautiful thing. But when such a place is full of selfishness and greed, you feel that it is a shame and only a mockery of what it professes to be. Is not the same thing true of our spiritual blessings? What a mean thing it is for us to take all the comfort and peace of God's great mercy, and fail to give ourselves up to seeking after the lost. And so Samuel passed Eliab by, and the next, and still the next, came on, until seven sons of Jesse had passed before him. They sent then for David. He was only a shepherd lad; but in David, after all, was the hope of the family. How many of us are thus blind to-day! There is a boy who lives next door to us, but he is young and awkward, and when we are thinking of the people we can win to Christ we are likely to pass him by. There is a boy working in the same store with you, but he is young and uninteresting, and it does not occur to you that it would be a great thing, a marvellous thing, to turn those young, awkward steps toward heaven. But nobody can tell what the boy will grow into if the Spirit of God can be put upon him. A recent writer tells how, over in old Scotland many years ago, a faithful minister coming early to the church met one of his deacons, whose face wore a very resolute but distressed expression. "I came early to meet you," he said. "I have something on my conscience to say to you. Pastor, there must be something radically wrong in your preaching and work; there has been but one person added to the church in a whole year, and he is only a boy." Said the old man: "I have great hopes of that one boy—Robert. Some seed that we sow bears fruit late, but that fruit is generally the most precious of all." The old minister went to the pulpit that day with a grieved and heavy heart. He closed his discourse with dim and tearful eyes. He lingered in the dear old church after the rest were gone. He wished to be alone. Before this altar he had prayed over

the dead forms of a bygone generation, and had welcomed the children of a new generation; and here, yes, here, he had been told at last that his work was no longer owned and blessed. No one remained. Not one? "Only a boy." The boy was Robert Moffat. "Well, Robert," said the minister. "Do you think if I were willing to work hard for an education I could ever become a preacher?" "A preacher?" "Perhaps a missionary?" There was a long pause. Tears filled the eyes of the old minister. At length he said: "This heals the ache in my heart, Robert. I see the Divine hand now. May God bless you, my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher." The old minister sleeps beneath the trees in the humble place of his labours, but men remember his work because of what he was to that one boy, and what that one boy was to the world. "Only a boy!" A spiritual revolution would take place in this city if all of us were as truly anxious here that the young boys and girls, the young men and women, should be anointed to the service of Christ as Samuel was to see David anointed king. (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*) *The anointing of David*:—Few questions are more frequently asked than these: How shall I get on in life? How shall I give the right impulse to my children? How shall I plan for their making the most of themselves? Our study of the Old Testament has this advantage, that the hand and counsel of God are formally presented and connected with the rise and fall, the well and ill-doing, of men. Saul has failed through forgetfulness of what he was to be and to do, and the self-will of the people is being punished through his failure. The God of Israel might have left them to reap as they had sown, but He is patient, and if one will not do His will, He will, within certain limits, find another. Hence the mission of Samuel His prophet to Bethlehem. The tenderness of Samuel appears in his sorrow for Saul's rejection (ch. 15, 35; see Elijah's case, 1 Kings ch. 19), but grief must not keep us from duty and adequate provision for the future. Israel had chosen to have a king; now God will provide a fitting leader, having in view not only present interest, but interests stretching forward into a boundless future. Samuel is to go and anoint the king of God's providing. But, godly and loyal as he is, Samuel fears, for the best men are not always at their best. Saul is still actual and rightful king, and he may hear of this and treat him as a rebel. So he is directed to a course which is not marked by duplicity, but prudence—not by lying, but by reticence. Silence is sometimes as much a duty as plain speech is at other times (ch. 10, 16). A man may be reticent, but not deceitful, as that minister might be if questioned by meddlers regarding the man he warned. The Divine word is, "Arise, anoint him." Concurrently with this solemn rite, a Divine gift was given David. How much was explained to him we are not told, but he began from that hour to receive a preparation of mind through the teaching and power of the Holy Ghost. New ideas, aims, hopes, took hold of his nature. Samuel went to Ramah, but David would be in communication with him, and get further light in what was for the present a secret. (chs. 19, 20.) 1. We see here how man's sinful will is regarded, overruled, and used for the exhibition of God's will, yet without sin in God. Are we trying to do God's will as His? We must carry it out in the end, but is it to be willingly or the reverse? 2. We see how God prepares His instruments for their work in their mind and character. David's training begins, perhaps, by hopes and longings put into his heart, of which his language in ch. 17 is the outcome. 3. But this does not remove from view the fitness in him, coming of a good family where piety was prized and life was trained for God (Num. 1, 7; 2, 3; Ruth 4, 20). Jesse was an acquaintance of Samuel—a good sign. No training, however, and no anointing, dispenses with the Holy Ghost (v. 18). 4. David in his shepherd-life was being made ready for his work and for his typical place. 5. Even an eminent prophet needs to be guided as to his feelings and his judgments. God is "the only wise." (*John Hall, D.D.*) *David anointed*:—God determines His own methods for accomplishing His own ends. When an evil spirit had come upon Saul, and he had proved himself unworthy longer to reign over Israel, a train of influences was put in operation to bring another and more worthy incumbent to the throne. I. A DIVINE DIRECTING. Samuel was at Ramah. Here the Lord meets him, with the direction to fill his horn with oil and proceed to Bethlehem, where from the family of Jesse is to be taken Israel's future king. Samuel foresaw the difficulty. There would be peril to his life in doing publicly so rash an act as anointing Saul's successor while as yet he sat on the throne. But He who has promised to give wisdom to those who seek, now guided the prophet's way. "Those," says Matthew Henry, "that go about God's work in God's way

shall be directed step by step." Thus obeying and praying, the prophet enters the town. The appearance, however, of this man of God in the little village filled the elders with alarm. Too often, in planning even for the Lord's work, His servants fall into as great unwisdom as would the prophet had he openly proclaimed in the streets of Bethlehem, "I am come to anoint Saul's successor." II. A DIVINE SELECTING. God has indicated one to become ruler of the nation. The people had selected Saul; God has appointed David. Saul was chosen for qualities which men hold in high esteem; David was appointed because of the spirit which dwelt within. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Doubtless there was not one in Israel who would have looked on David as suited to become Saul's successor. We learn from this that no choice is wise which Heaven does not direct. Now, as then, if any one seeks wisdom, he must ask it from above. Man often chooses to his hurt because he chooses without God. Now, also, as then, right qualities of heart are needed in positions high or low. Again, we learn that the hope of the nation and the world is in the young. Jesse and his household thought that the child David might not be invited into the prophet's presence. So think multitudes to-day. When churches spread their feast, and families gather at the sacramental board, by the absence there of youthful faces, one is often painfully reminded of the question Samuel asked—"Are these all my children?" Parents, Sabbath-school teachers, churches, pass not the children by. III. A DIVINE QUALIFYING. Although by Samuel's act the youthful David was now anointed, he was yet to be trained to become a king. This God effected by methods of His own. The lad returned from the feast to his shepherd life. He was, however, pre-eminently in God's school. He was the same boy, but with his thoughts lifted higher. Significantly it is said that "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." Henceforth the ordinary events of life were to him God's messengers—instruments by which he was being fitted for a throne. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *David's anointing*:—We shall now view the ordinance through which David passed, and the farther endowments bestowed on him in order to the effective discharge of regal duty. In the ordinance itself we are warned that all authority and dignity emanate from God. The ceremony as commanded in the text was highly interesting, impressive, and instructive. The unction here used was a royal one. Priests had been anointed, and prophets likewise; before this occasion, however, the ceremony of kingly unction had never been witnessed except in the case of Saul. 1. The object of the ceremony, then, was first official. It intimated, by its solemnity, and its minister, that the work was of God—His design and His appointment, and, therefore, not to be disputed. This sacredness of the ceremony precluded all jealousy and contention. God had avowed David as His representative, and so declared Himself for his protection. 2. Our business now is to view natural abilities and endowments in the same light with those official qualifications. We have no miracles, they are unnecessary; we have no form or ceremony, which, by its own virtue, or the virtue of agents and ministers, can communicate to us any unusual or supernatural quality. Nevertheless, the Creator of mind is the ruler of mind; and we observe that by a train of known and ordinary circumstances, providentially directed, He has often raised to honour, and qualified with ability, the very men whom least of all and last of all we should have singled out for advancement. Our position was a gift from God, a free election on His part: our natural endowments likewise came from His special favour. There is an account demanded of our duties—our ordinary ones, our social ones, our worldly work and occupation, how far we have been faithful, and how far every thing committed to our trust has been dedicated and applied to the good of man and glory of God, as God is now revealed to us. A general impression prevails with men as to moral responsibility, but the responsibility which presses on us connected with the Gospel of Christ, this is not so fully admitted. Then let us remember that if we are thus Christ's people we are so far a purpose that must be fulfilled. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood; you are called to a regal office, see that ye fulfil it." It is this you are called to reign over sin. (Rom. vi. 12.) You are called to reign over the world, to overcome it in all its forms of hostility against God and godliness. Who is sufficient for these things, who could venture on the mere calling or appointment, without the becoming qualifications? Hence our eyes and hearts must be on the spiritual consecration. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One." (1 John, ii. 20.) This is our oil of consecration, and by it we receive virtually the power to sustain us in our great appointment. 3. The

first influence of this unction is knowledge, the last is glory. Knowledge was the ambition of man, under the false teaching of Satan, and he found it not except in the discovery of his own guilt, and the experience of sin. Now, we know better things; we know the love of Christ, the remedy for sin, the love of the Father, the peace of faith, the abiding succour of the Holy Ghost. 4. The prophetic or typical signification of the ceremony directed in the text. David was a figure of Christ, and a striking one. He is called, He is adopted, and visibly before His household is ordained to be the preserver and king of Israel. Are we not led instantly in our thoughts to the commission and action of the Baptist? Urged on by his own predictions, and administering the rite of baptism preparative to the arrival of this Saviour, we may easily imagine with what an ardent and inquiring gaze this herald of the Redeemer's approach looked for him, to whom was turned both true and false, the expectation of the world. We can conceive his repeated disappointment when noble after noble swept along in proud array, perhaps to hear and honour his awakening call to penitence; still no recognition was afforded—no signal yet declared the promised Saviour. At last a lowly form draws near—an humble garb, a gentle mien, an unpretending aspect, which exact no worldly reverence. He is mingled, too, in the crowd of publicans and sinners, who throng the Baptist's ministry, to win some peace, some hope, to their afflicted, guilty hearts. Here is one without comeliness or external majesty, from whom the common eye would turn heedlessly away; but the spirit within the Baptist calls to homage—"Arise, anoint him, this is he." At the baptism of Christ we are told the spirit of the Lord descended on Him—the full unction of the Holy Spirit was poured out on Him. (Matt. iii. 17.) Christ, then, was publicly anointed, to be our prophet, priest, and king. Let us follow a few passages of Scripture which bear upon His consecration to office. (1.) The consecration of Christ rehearses to us that our deliverer was one in whom dwelt the whole fulness of the Godhead bodily. He was no creature, but the God of creation; no inferior power of Heaven, but the Supreme Being Himself, and hence our redemption is most sure. (2.) In the consecration of Jesus Christ at the Jordan, there was a special conveyance made of qualities suitable to His prophetic office; in these qualities rest all our comforts. Hear the commission of this Saviour, and the qualities conferred on him for the fulfilment of his office. (Luke. iv. 18, 19.) "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," &c. (3.) And, finally, this typical import of David's consecration was a representation of Christ's royal appointment. In the forty-fifth Psalm this royal appointment is described; there the Divine origin of Christ is proclaimed, and His perfect Deity is insisted on. His unction, too, is specified, but it is for authority and government, rather than spiritual ministry—"Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Ministry is over, and suffering, and death, and all inferiority; He sits now on the throne of glory, waiting till His foes become His footstool, waiting till the hour arrives for the judgment of a world which shall have outlived the period allotted for repentance, and yet repented not. (C. M. *Fleury. A.M.*) *The anointing of David*:—I. THE SHORTSIGHTEDNESS OF EVEN THE BEST OF MEN. Even Samuel was taken by the fair face and imposing stature of Eliab. Yet he knew nothing of Eliab's inner man. Human nature must be estimated simply by external observation. Hence it is only natural that he should make mistakes. II. THE INSCRUTABLE PURPOSES OF GOD. He overrules all the estimates of men, and His estimates are very different to those of men. The servants of Jesse had not even thought it worth while to call David in. This is only reasonable. For. 1. He must know the nature of man. 2. Because He has no selfish purposes to accomplish. 3. Because He is actuated by the most benign of motives to all. III. THE VALUABLE INSTRUCTION TO BE DERIVED. 1. Moral worth is the truest beauty. 2. We should seek to form our standard of excellence by the character of God. 3. We must not be rash in our judgment of any one's character. (*Homilist.*) *The principle of Divine selection*:—The first great principle involved in the choice of David is that which runs through all Scripture, because it runs through all Providence, that "the first shall be last, and the last first." Low valleys are blessed with broad rivers; the heights are barren and parched. God's gifts are given to the lowly in heart, and His judgments fall "upon all that is proud and haughty, and it shall be brought low,"—"and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Not once nor twice in the world's history have its deliverers and guides sprung from the lower classes. "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills." A miner's son in Thuringia remoulds the Church which a Prince's son on the papal

throne was corrupting still more; a brewer in Huntingdon fashions England "into another mould." And as regards individual salvation, it is the "meek and lowly in heart" who comes to Jesus and find rest to their souls, while "the wise and prudent" have no eyes to see the Light of light. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The future king anointed*:—The anointing of David was a mysterious incident. Saul knew nothing of it. He went on as before. The kingdom was undisturbed, though a new king was in its midst. So it is in the world to-day. Jesus Christ is crowned King of kings, but the world over which He has supreme authority knows in its carnal confidence nothing at all of what is going on behind the veil of destiny. Even while winter storms are raging the summer is prophesied by the tiny buds that quietly nestle in the bark of the trees. A new life is secretly cradled there, but months must pass before it is manifested. So Jesus Christ will come secretly, first in what the early Greek Christians called the "Parousia," His presence in the air; and afterwards He will appear in the "Epiphany," the brightness of His manifestation. (*Christian Commonwealth.*) *Who are elected?*:—Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to discover the object of God's election. This would have been a very difficult task if the God who sent him had not accompanied him, and spoken with the sure voice of inspiration within him so soon as the chosen object stood before him. I. **THE SURPRISE** of all when they found that David, the least in his father's house, was the object of the Lord's choice, a king over Israel. 1. Observe that his brethren had no idea that David would be selected; such a thought had never entered into their heads. 2. It is more painful to notice that David's father should have had no idea of David's excellence. It sometimes happens that one in the family is overlooked, even by his parent, in his hopes and prayers. The father seems to think, "God may be pleased to convert William; he may call Mary; I trust in His Providence we shall see John grown up to be a credit to us; but as for Richard or Sarah, I do not know what will ever become of them." How often will parents have to confess that they have misjudged, and that the one upon whom they have set the black mark has been after all the joy and comfort of their lives, and has given them more satisfaction than all the rest put together. 3. It is clear also that Samuel, God's servant, had at first no idea of David's election. Sometimes the Christian minister is deceived. He consults with flesh and blood, and selects Eliab, the man with a fine person. Then rank will come before the minister, and if he sees a person of high estate cheerfully listening to the gospel, he is very ready to think, "Surely the Lord hath chosen him." Again, others are so well educated that when the Word is preached they appreciate the style in which it is delivered, and the remarks which they make concerning it are so sensible and so judicious that the preacher is apt to say, "Surely the Lord hath chosen these!" At times, we feel sure that we have now pitched upon the right man, for we are charmed with our hearer's natural amiability of disposition, and are cheered by his tenderness and susceptibility of mind to religious impressions; and yet we are disappointed. Many lovely blossoms never become fruits, and hopeful saplings prove not to be plants of the Lord's right hand planting, and therefore are plucked up. At times, too, we hear such admirable conversation about religion that we conclude, "Now we have found out the chosen of the Lord." Meanwhile, the very one whom we overlooked, the least one in the assembly, has been the David upon whom God's blessing has fallen. How matchless is the sovereignty of God! "His ways are past finding out." The very poorest, the most illiterate, the meanest and most obscure, the things despised, yea, "the things that are not," doth He choose, to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. It strikes me that there was one person more astonished when David was anointed than even his brothers, or his father, or the prophet—and that was himself. He was a wonder unto many, but chiefly to himself. II. **THE TOKEN** of election, the secret mark which the Lord sets in due time upon the chosen. In due time every chosen person receives the seal of grace. That stamp is a new heart and a right spirit. What kind of heart had David? We may find it out by his Psalms. We cannot tell when some of the Psalms were written, but if any of them were written in his youth, the twenty-third was certainly one. 1. That beautiful pastoral poem opens a window into the heart of David, let us look through it, and we shall soon perceive that he possessed a believing heart. How sweet is the sentence, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." 2. We note, as we read the psalm, that David's heart was also a meditative heart. Mark the words, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters." He elsewhere writes: "My medi-

lation of Him shall be sweet." 3. Go on with the Psalm, and I think you will be struck with the humble heart which David had, for all the way through he does not praise himself. "He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul." See, he has no crown for his own head; the crown is all for the Mighty One who is His shepherd. 4. We should altogether fail in describing David if we were to omit other qualifications. His was a holy heart. Observe in the same Psalm, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." David delighted not in iniquity; the men of Belial he put far from him. "A liar shall not tarry in my sight," said he. He loved the people of God. He styles them, "The excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight." Holiness which becomes God's house was very delightful to David's soul. He loved the commandments of God because of their holiness. "Thy word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loveth it." (Psalm cxix. 140.) 5. Note what a brave heart beat in his breast. Where will you find a braver man than David? Let me remind you that he had a very contented and grateful heart. 6. You should further observe the constancy of David's heart. He says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." He was not one of the Pliables, who set out and turn back again at the first slough into which they tumble. By such marks may we know our election. I would God that those who are so positive of their election would condescend sometimes to try themselves by Scriptural marks and evidences. III. MANIFESTATION, or the way in which the election of God is made apparent to ourselves and others. We cannot see the hearts of our fellow-men, and therefore the heart can never be to us the way of distinguishing the elect of God, except so far as it is seen in the acts and words. 1. Now the first sign by which this election was made known to David himself and to a few others, who probably did not know much about it, was by his being anointed. There is a season when God anoints His people. They have believed, but there may elapse a little time between the believing and the conscious anointing; but suddenly, when the Lord has illuminated their hearts to know and understand Divine things clearly, the Spirit of God comes with a sealing power upon them, and from that day forward they rejoice to know that they have the indwelling of the Spirit, and that they are set apart for God. 2. The manifestation, however, went on in another way. After the anointing it appears that David became a man distinguished for the valour of his deeds. 3. It appears, too, that he was very prudent. The same witness-bearer said he was "a man prudent in matters." Such will you be, when as the elect of God the Spirit of wisdom rests upon you. 4. Mark well that one of the ways by which your election will become clear and sure to all God's people will be this:—If you are anointed king as David was before you, you will come into conflict with Saul. It cannot be possible that the chosen of God shall for ever live in peace with the heirs of hell. 5. I think David was never more clearly manifested to be God's elect, except at the last of all, than when he was an outlaw. He never seems such a grand man as when he is among the tracks of the wild goats of Engedi. We do not read of many faults, and slips, and errors then. The outlawed David is most certainly manifested to all Israel to be the chosen of God, because the chosen of man cannot abide him. The brightest days for Christian piety were the days of martyrdom and persecution. Scotland has many saints, but she never has had such rich saints as those who lived in covenanting times; England has had many rich divines who have taught the word, but the Puritanic age was the golden age of England's Christian literature. 6. Remember that after all conflicts were over, David was crowned. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The anointed of the God of Jacob*:—1. The historical narrative commences just where David's life becomes an instrument of service for God. Is this not where our life-history commences, the point from which the record starts? The years of training for the work require no record there. God's plan concerning our creation has one great object, "that we may glorify Him"; and when our will is consciously surrendered to His, then our names appear as fitted into the mosaic of His purpose. Then, and then only, are we co-workers together with Him. No true heart ever altogether loses the influence of early days, and when those days are saturated with the piety of a godly mother, the influence is an important factor in the formation of character. 2. Samuel was on the Lord's work when his judgment was at fault. How often we need to be kept back—prevented from going as otherwise we would beyond our instructions! He who sends will tell you when to lift and on whom to empty the horn of consecrating oil. 3. We are reminded here of the old but ever-needed truth, that in the diligent performance of present

duties lies the road to further usefulness and honour. David was just attending to his ordinary duties, minding the sheep. So was Gideon, when God's angel called him. Levi also was at the receipt of custom, and the disciples were mending their nets. 4. All great deeds are built upon and built up with little ones. The stupendous monoliths are grains, and rest upon atoms. The mightiest mountain is the aggregate of smallest grains, as is the ocean of tiny drops of water. So the hand that was to lay low the Philistine giant learned its accuracy of aim by exercise in daily duty. I. IN THE DIVINE CALL LIES THE SECRET OF ALL SUCCESSFUL SERVICE AS OF ALL JOYFUL LIFE. And God knows where and when to find us. He sends His messengers direct to us. Every place is open to the coming of the Holy Spirit's monitions. II. THE DIVINE CALL COMES IRRESPECTIVE OF OTHERS. No brethren, or sisters, or elders can hinder. If there be no Samuel at our feasts, there is ever the Spirit of God calling us through varied instrumentalities to arise. His whispers inly heard must be obeyed. Sheep nor brethren, business nor friends, must keep us from obedience. III. THE DIVINE CALL COMES TO THE INDIVIDUAL. David is the one whom Samuel takes apart and tells of God's choice. IV. THE DIVINE CALL SEPARATES US FROM OTHERS. Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah, Nethaniel, Raddai, Ozem, and, maybe, Elihu (1 Chron. xxvii. 18), the brothers, may be standing by, but Divine anointing separates. The Divine call separates you from yourself unto God's own self. And all that stands in the way of this separation makes misery. Beware. Obey. Response to Divine invitation is the only way to advance to Divine service. (*H. E. Stone.*) *The coming man*:—The son of Jesse will henceforth be the hope of the nation. I. GOD DOES NOT ACT FROM IMPULSE. He always has a reason for any changes He makes; hence we hear Him say to Samuel, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?" Tears are too precious to waste on those whom God has forsaken. It is as wise to thresh chaff as hope for results where divinity has withdrawn itself. The changes which history brings all go to show that the Ruler of the universe never is at fault. Calmly He lays His hand on the helm, and without fuss the course of a nation is altered. If the patriot or the Christian remembered this he would not be so ready to imitate the sin of Uzzah. Let us not tremble for the ark of God. II. The coming of Samuel to Bethlehem proclaims the fact that SLAIN OPPORTUNITIES HAVE NO RESURRECTION. Saul had a great chance. Never had a monarch such a beginning. Opposition only helped. Rivalry was an impossibility. Spring and summer held the field. If he had been loyal to God, what was not possible? The greater the opportunity the more the loss if we miss the tide. Ships in ballast can afford to wait longer than those in cargo. The more learning, or genius, or even religion, the more waste if we miss our chance. Saul is rejected of God. Henceforth he must be in eclipse. What is true of persons is still more so in churches. Neither Bishops nor Convocations can afford to disobey the mandate of God. III. Saul has unfitted himself to carry out the Divine programme, but GOD IS NEVER AT THE END OF HIS RESOURCES. The son of Jesse can take the place of the son of Kish. What examples of this same thing abound in political life! How historic names pale and famous places cease to be known! Judah takes the place of Benjamin, and unknown Bethlehem wins a place on the map of the world. Tamworth, Bedford, Knowsley, Hawarden, Beaconsfield may in future be names in guide-books rather than history. Possibly Oxford and Epworth may share their fate! But other names appear. Providence has always arrows in its quiver. If one man will not, another will! There were many learned and eloquent clergymen in England when John Wesley and George Whitefield began to preach. Many of them might have shared the glory of saving our country from that which defiled and devoured France. God is not at the far end nowadays. IV. Jesse did not know the great man he had among his sons; for when Samuel came and called for the young men, David was left out of the reckoning; but then THE ELECT ARE NEVER OVERLOOKED BY GOD. Human eyes may not see the nimbus, but He who put it there does. V. After all, let us say to the anointed, PROMOTION IS NOT ALL PROFIT. The javelin is in the palace. Men rise to become prominent as targets. If you don't like to be shot, don't come when Samuel sends for you. The Church and the nation are crying out for men for the forlorn hope. Honour awaits the man who is not too anxious for the safety of his father's son. But Saul is envious, and has a javelin for the harper; so stay and prove your fitness for the company of the ewes—if you are afraid of the risk which comes to those who climb above their fellows. (*Thomas Champness.*) *The blessed discovery of incipient greatness*:—Sir Humphry Davy, when asked to give

a list of his discoveries, carefully traced the history of those successive researches which made him the first chemist of his day, and then significantly added: "But the master discovery of my life was the discovery of Michael Faraday!" He found him the untaught son of a smith, taking notes of his lectures, and yearning to study science. He took him into his laboratory, and there discovered that he had in his humble assistant one who would some day rival, if not eclipse, his master. Blessed work of discovering men. (*Arthur J. Pierson, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.—"From that day forward":—From whatever side we view the life of David, it is remarkable. It may be that Abraham excelled him in faith; and Moses in the power of concentrated fellowship with God; and Elijah in the fiery force of his enthusiasm. But none of these was so many-sided as the richly-gifted son of Jesse. But in all he seemed possessed of a special power with God and man, which could not be accounted for by the fascination of his manner, the beauty of his features, the rare gifts with which his nature was dowered, or the spiritual power which was so remarkable an attribute of his heart. "The Spirit of the Lord came mightily on David from that day forward." I. IT BEGAN LIKE ANY ORDINARY DAY. No angel-trumpet heralded it; no faces looked out of heaven; the sun arose that morning according to his wont over the purple walls of the hills of Moab. With the first glimmer of light the boy was on his way to lead his flock to pasture-lands heavy with dew. His father and brothers had followed their pursuits and pleasures in almost total disregard of the young son and brother who was destined to make their names immortal. He had borne it all in patience. It was a genuine pleasure to feel that the family circle in great Samuel's eyes was not complete till he had come. He therefore left his sheep with the messenger, and started at full speed for home. Let us so live as to be prepared for whatever the next hour may bring forth. The spirit in fellowship with God, the robe stainlessly pure, the loins girt, the lamp trimmed. The faithful fulfilment of the common-places of daily life is the best preparation for any great demand that may suddenly break in upon our lives. II. IT WAS THE CONSUMMATION OF PREVIOUS TRAINING. We must not suppose that now, for the first time, the Spirit of God wrought in David's heart. From his earliest days, David had probably been the subject of His quickening and renewing work; but he had probably never experienced, before the day of which we treat, that special unction of the Holy One symbolised in the anointing oil, and indispensable for all successful spiritual work. Our Lord was born of the Spirit; but His anointing for service did not take place till at the age of thirty, when on the threshold of His public work, He emerged from the waters of baptism. The Apostles were certainly regenerate before the day of Pentecost; but they had to wait within closed doors until they were endued with power for the conversion of men. This blessed anointing for service cannot be ours, except there has been a previous gracious work on the heart. There must be the new life—the life of God. The descending flame must fall upon the whole burnt-offering of a consecrated life. III. IT WAS MINISTERED THROUGH SAMUEL. The old prophet had conferred many benefits on his native land; but none could compare in importance with his eager care for its youth. Saul, in the earlier years of his manhood, felt the charm and spell of the old man's character. The descent of the oil was symbolical; in other words, it had no spiritual efficacy, but was the outward and visible sign that the Spirit of God had come mightily on the shepherd-lad. IV. IT WAS A DAY OF REJECTION. Seven of Jesse's sons were passed over. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The secular gifts of the Holy Ghost*:—It is not necessary to state that the gifts of the blessed Spirit have always been holy and good; but it is important to observe that they differ in the two Testaments. In the new covenant they are bestowments of grace and spiritual powers; but in the older prominence is given as well to secular gifts—skill for the craftsman, courage for the soldier, and statesmanship for the ruler. It is greatly wise to take this wider view of the Spirit's work as seen in the world as well as in the Church, in the more secular gifts of the great men of old time as well as the spiritual gifts of the holy apostles and prophets. In illustrating the secular gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the value of inspiration in common life, this discourse will deal with three eventful periods of Old Testament, and show how apposite were the bestowments of the Spirit. I. The first period gives an example of inspiration in the world of ART. In the wilds of Sinai Moses received the command to build the tabernacle, and to prepare the vessels for holy ministry; the voice Divine saying with much impressiveness: "See that

thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." "The Jews affirmed that an ark of fire and a table and lampstand of fire came down from heaven to Moses as patterns, and that Gabriel, clothed as a workman, showed Moses how to make them." But this is a needless and clumsy invention; nor can we think of the gentle presence-angel descending to earth in the guise of a grimy Vulcan. Comparing this commission with that given to David, we find the true interpretation: "All this the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." But the task of embodying the types shown to Moses fell to humbler minds and hands. God's "Where art thou?" seldom fails to bring out the man for His service; and in this case it drew out of obscurity the first and only great artist that Israel ever produced; and the name and effigy of Bezaleel, the son of Uri, appear on the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park among the greatest sculptors and painters known to fame. It is remarkable that the inspiration of Bezaleel is mentioned most clearly and fully three times over, more emphatically than that of any man in the Scriptures. Statuary was not permitted in Israel until the days of contact with the Assyrians, and so one department of art was excluded; but in the very varied work connected with the construction and ritual of the tabernacle there was scope enough for the large inspiration of the great artist. What a striking witness to the existence of the religiousness of true work lingers among us in the common word "calling"—a man's daily task regarded as a Divine appointment! The builders of our ancient minsters have long commended this spirit to later times; and in such truth and patience Bezaleel wrought his holy task. It may be that an undesigned proof of the religious spirit of this artist is to be found in the chapter following the account of his call and equipment. When the people madly cried, "Up, make us gods," the too compliant Aaron, who lacked not the family genius, was ready for the task; and when the moulded calf was brought forth, it was he who gave it the finishing-touches with a graving-tool. Is it not natural to ask how it came to pass that his nephew Bezaleel was not employed in this shameless violation of the first commandment? Is it not fair to conclude that he firmly declined to debase his gifts in such a service, and that, like the Hebrew confessors of an after time, he refused to bow down to the golden image? The gifts of the world's greatest artists have been consecrated to the service of the Church, and he who would see their highest proofs of genius must visit the noble temples of Christendom. Shall we deny a Divine inspiration to these men? It is said of the Spanish painter, Juan Joannes, that he first received the sacrament before commencing any great work; of Fra Angelico, that he never put his brush to the canvas without kneeling on the floor of his cell to ask help of God; of John of Fiesola, that all his tasks were inspired by religion, and in earlier days Paulinus of Tyre was called the second Bezaleel. Nor have the "evangelists of art" ceased from among men. The pictures of Holman Hunt and Noel Paton have touched thousands whom a sermon flies. Let us own that "the worlds of science and of art" are both revealed and ruled by God, and let us pray for the artist as well as the preacher, that he may be so touched by the simple story of Bethlehem and the pathos of the cross, and so moved by the Holy Ghost, that he may in turn move the hearts of multitudes. II. The next instance of secular inspiration belongs to the IRON AGE OF THE JUDGES—a troubled, restless time, that called not for the artist, scarcely for the prophet (for the voice of Deborah alone breaks the long silence between Moses and Samuel), but the soldier with his gifts of prowess and courage. The inspiration of the great chiefs of that period is distinctly asserted. The lesson of Horeb is still needed by the nations, that what Hazael's sword of war could not effect should be done by Jehu's sword of justice, and what this could not smite should fall before Elisha's two-edged blade of truth. But though war is not the mightiest force, it has unquestionably played a great part in the history of the world, and an honourable part when it has been waged, not in wrath and ambition, but in defence of country and conscience. Surely we may believe that Joshua is not the only soldier to whom the heavenly Warrior has appeared, that Gideon is not alone in his claim to wield the sword of the Lord, and that the book of Joshua does not contain the last of the wars of the Lord. If we allow Heaven's inspiration to a man like Jephthah, it is not irreverent to claim it for Gustavus Adolphus, whose motto was, "God is my armour"; for our Alfred the Great, who felt himself to be the instrument of the Eternal; for Francis Drake, who said when he stepped on board his tiny craft to meet the thundering fleets of Spain, "I have put my hand to the plough, and by the

grace of God I shall never look back." History records few nobler utterances than the reply of William of Orange to Governor Sonoy: "You ask me if I have entered into a firm treaty with any king or potentate; to which I answer, that before I ever took up the cause of the oppressed Christians in these provinces, I had entered into a close alliance with the King of kings; and I am firmly convinced that all who put their trust in Him shall be saved by His almighty hand." Truly

The peace of heaven is theirs, that lift their swords
In such a just and charitable war.

III We pass to the DAYS OF THE KINGS for a third example of secular inspiration. Saul turned his steps homeward after his memorable interview with the grand old king-maker. As the elect of God drew near the company of prophets the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he began in almost a paroxysm of inspiration to join in their sacred exercises. The importance of that high visitation is strongly marked by two statements: God gave him "another heart," and he was "turned into another man." These expressions must not be charged too strongly with theological meanings; they are rather assurances that the awkward peasant, trembling at the destiny awaiting him, was then and there endowed with gifts befitting the head of the nation. The same high inspiration came to the second king of Israel. No sooner had the anointing oil fallen on his head than it is recorded that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." God's cruse of holy oil is not yet exhausted, nor are all His great commissions given out. Shall we allow, as we are bidden, that Cyrus the heathen was called and girded by God, and deny the gift and calling of Heaven to that young English Daniel who ere he was little beyond his teens guided the labouring ship of state through the wild white waters of England's most perilous days?

Young in years, but in sage counsel old,
Than whom a better senator ne'er held
The helm of Rome.

Without irreverence we may believe that the Divine call which drew David from the sheepfolds to guide the destinies of his country, brought forth that poor country lad from the far wilds of the west, and made him the occupant of the White House, that he might do that deed of glory which sheds undying lustre on his rule—the freeing of the slave. (*R. Butterworth.*) *Man-building*:—Emerson says, "the main enterprise of the world, for splendour and for extent is the upbuilding of a man." Of that enterprise, David, the son of Jesse, the victor of Goliath, the King of Israel, and the Poet of Humanity, is one of the most signal and fruitful examples. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find his peer. David is not only the topmost man of his century, but also the climax of the best life of the chosen people of God, the consummate flower of the religion of Moses in its best days. Hence, with a full recognition of his place in the building up of the life of men, the Hebrew annalists record his career with a fulness of detail, warmth of colour, and rapture of feeling, that belong to no other biography of the ancient Revelation; so that we know "the darling of Israel" as well as we know General Gordon, and better than we know the Apostles Paul and John; as well as we know St. Augustine from his "Confessions" and sermons, and far better than we know Socrates from the reports of Xenophon and the dialogues of Plato. It is the real humanness of David that wins all hearts, and perpetually renews his influence in the thought and life of the world. It is David, the man, the young man, the man in the making, that fixes our gaze. He is not a priest exciting a momentary curiosity by superb attire and solemn acting, or kindling awe by an assumed mastery of the secrets of the invisible world. He is not a prophet, starting up out of the desert sands, like the Bedouin Elijah before Ahab, and terrifying us into submission. Nor, indeed, is it his kingly greatness and courtly magnificence that holds us spell-bound in his presence. Nor again, is it his physique that gains upon us. It is rather that we see in him one of our very selves, a man springing from the people, sharing their lot, and bearing their misfortunes; but battling on, and still on, using as his strongest weapon that true trust in a spiritual God which is within every man's grasp, and of which he never relaxes his hold. What then is the full tale of this man's upbuilding? How was he put together? 1. Remember first, man is a spirit. We know him as

body, as we know electricity by a shock from a battery or a message from a distant friend, or as we know chemical force by its effects. But the body is only the wire along which the spiritual electricity runs, the case in which the actual watch ticks, the pipes and reeds through which the soul of the organist thrills us, the cage in which the bird sings, the tent in which the man dwells. The man is not in the till but in the character, not in the nerve but in the conscience, not in the sense but in the regal will, not in "the outward appearance" but in "the heart." 2. Remember next, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Spirit builds spirit. Soul makes soul. "Man does not live by bread alone"—he cannot live without it, but he does not live the life of a man by it, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Standing in full view of these eternal principles you are not surprised that the Hebrew historian, with an exuberant enthusiasm and an unquestioning assurance, accounts for David—for all he was and all he did—by the simple and comprehensive statement, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward"—came decisively and clearly, and continued to come with character-building energy for evermore. With similar prominence does this fact bulge in all David's references to himself. "Thy humility," i.e., Thy condescension, Thy eagerness to dwell in the heart that is contrite, to guide the spirit that looks for Thy leading, to give strength to those that fight for Thee, to reward all those who serve Thee—this hath made me great. But decisively and fully as this exposition of the upbuilding is given in the Hebrew Scriptures it does not content us. We still ask for light as to the way along which the universal Spirit of God came to, and took possession of him, the method by which the diverse materials of his nature were completed into a spiritual and vital unity, and the processes used in raising them to their maximum of energy and serviceableness. The anointing of David was not only the designation of a successor to Saul; it was also the crowning and perfecting of the long influence of Samuel on David's heart and character. Josephus suggests that as the consecrating oil bathed the flowing locks and fell on the garments of the lad, the prophet "whispered" his kingly destiny in his ear, and so set his whole soul aflame with Divine ambitious, far-reaching yearnings, and oppressive and goading solitudes. Certainly such Divine whispers have often been heard from human lips. Does not Hugh Miller fix the moment, as one of mental regeneration in which he was roused to the consciousness of the possession of a power superior to that required in shaping stones? Did not Henry Martyn start on a new and higher career after he had been made aware of his possibilities, and inspired by a friend to say, "I verily think I may do something, and I will set about it?" Were not the germs of the new life infused into Saul of Tarsus as he gazed on the angelic patience and undying devotion of Stephen, the first of Christian martyrs? It is God's law. He does not dispense with the human, He uses it. Man is saved by man. The Incarnation and the Cross are the type and pattern of all life, and of all ministry, and of all progress. God flows through man to man. Samuels anoint Davids. (*J. Clifford, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. But the Spirit departed from Saul.—*Temptations driving to God*:—Saul was rejected from being king, and the Spirit of God taken from him, and at the same time an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him, terrified or seized him suddenly. How startling this is! But, observe, it is not an evil spirit of the Lord. Evil spirits are not of God. Their evil is opposed to His will. He is wholly and unchangeably opposed to evil. No man can say when he is tempted of evil—I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man. But when a man chooses and cleaves to sin, clings to his own way, and persists in rebellion against God, he opens his mind to evil spirits and evil influences of all sorts. Even the natural world radiates influences which to a being like man are not all good, are sometimes even directly evil. The cunning, deceit, treachery and cruelty of some animals has a malign influence. The influences of nature, bland and stern, present subtle and powerful temptations. Over against the influences for evil, often inextricably intertwined with them, are the influences for good. Men feel that the drift and tendency of things is toward goodness, that the constitution of things favours righteousness. And over all things and every heart the Spirit of God broods, seeking to bring order out of chaos and life out of death. To moral beings belongs the prerogative of resisting and repelling influences, or welcoming and absorbing them. But how was this evil spirit from the Lord? It was permitted by God as a punishment. But

this is not all; the terror, pain and strife raised by the evil spirit were meant by God as a force to constrain Saul to turn and cry to God for help. Saul was delivered up to this evil spirit that he might know that it was an evil and bitter thing to depart from God. Had the rebellious Saul, sick, laden and tortured by evil, cried to God, he would have been heard, and would have become a better man than he ever was, a new man. Though he might not have been a king, he would have been a true child of God, a spiritual king and priest. **I. MEN MUST EITHER HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, OR AN EVIL SPIRIT.** God loves to dwell in the human heart. That is His chosen temple. The sky is vast. Its canopy is thick with worlds. But God does not choose that temple. Man rears lofty piles, and spends labour and art on them, lavishes beauty and splendour which are precious as evidences of love and reverence: but God's chosen temple is not there. His temple is in the lowly heart, in the bosom of the meanest of the sons of men who cries out for the living God. That temple may be stained and defiled, haunted with unclean things; but if there is penitence and faith in God's Son, God will come in and Himself cleanse the house. God abides in the soul, fills it and gladdens it. But if man will not have God, he cannot shut the door of his heart against other visitors. It is the nature of a spirit to come into contact with spirit, as it is the nature of the body to come into contact with matter, and either attract or repel it. Spirit cannot isolate itself from spirit, any more than matter can from matter. But the spirit can decide whether it will ally itself with the good or the evil. Whosoever receives the Infinite Spirit into his soul takes the one way of shutting out evil of every kind. Exclusion of God is not emptiness, it is most positive, active, and decided evil. Men that will not have God are really claiming kindred with evil spirits, and opening their heart to be inhabited by them. Man is like a house situated between two winds. On the one side comes the wind from a dreary, bleak desert, laden with fog and disease, blowing across foul and rotten things. The other side of the house fronts the sunlight and winds that blow from the wide, fresh sea and over gardens, orchards, and blooming fields. Everyone must decide on which side he is going to open. Both doors cannot be shut. You can only get the dismal, fatal door shut by opening wide the door that looks to the sea of eternity and the sunshine of God. The wind blowing in through this open door keeps that door of ruin shut. **II. THE STRESS OF INWARD TEMPTATION AND TROUBLE IS OFTEN PECULIARLY FITTED AND EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO DRIVE MEN TO GOD.** Of temptations and troubles which have this adaptation in a marked degree may be mentioned first—1. Melancholy. Saul's was a very conspicuous and overmastering melancholy. Melancholy is essentially the feeling of loneliness, the sense of isolation, of having a great burden of existence to bear. It is the soul's fear and shrinking and chill in the vast solitude of its house. It has driven many souls to God. Such haunted souls can scarcely escape an earnest look at life. They are continually incited to seek a medicine for their malady. They cannot rest in a formal, superficial religion, but must get into the very secret of God. So the melancholy man may become the most joyous of religious men. 2. A feeling of the vanity of existence is another great temptation and trouble. This is not melancholy; for men who have this feeling may be merry enough. To be followed, as many are, by the thought that life is a poor game at best, without substance, not worth the trouble that men take with it—this must take earnestness out of life, and make men mockers. It is a sore disease thus to live on the very surface of things, and feel as if one were only playing a part. Many are infected with the tendency. What does this feeling of emptiness and vanity point to? What is the voice that comes from it but this—Escape to the one substance and reality which alone gives substance and reality to life. 3. The mystery of life weighs on others. The sense of weakness and ignorance in the midst of a vast system of forces; the feeling of chaos that rules in the moral world and human life; the black tragedy of so many lives; the calamities, wars, inconceivable woes of millions; the disappointment, chagrin, disease, crime, and ruin everywhere—these press on some minds at times with immense weight. That is what Wordsworth calls, "the weight and mystery of all this unintelligible world." There are men to whom these questions are inevitable, rushing upon them like beasts of prey, or stretching like thunderclouds between them and the sun. Where is relief from such thoughts to be found? Where but in the belief in infinite goodness and wisdom lying behind all, can any thinking soul find rest? 4. The gloom and desolation of doubt and unbelief constrain and impel men to turn to God. It

sometimes happens that men who have long hovered round religion, making it an object of curiosity and speculation and debate, rather than matter of heart and life, fall gradually away from all belief. Even those who have never speculated, but only maintained a careless attitude towards religion, drift in this direction. But here a state of feeling arises which they had not dreamt of. Though they never had any earnestness in religion, yet the kind of belief they had gave them comfort and threw a certain meaning into life. Now they feel lonely without a Father in Heaven. The whole aspect of things has grown bare. They are no longer sure of right. The cord that tied things together has been taken away. Then comes the period of decay when all types lessen and lower down to the original blank. And certainly, if the fortunes of the human race are bound up with the history of the sun, nothing else can be looked for. Since all suns and worlds are like flowers that blossom and then wither, the doom of beings dependent on them cannot be different. If there is no God and Father, there is no escape from this conclusion. If there is no eternal home, where He gathers souls beyond the reach of evanescent systems, this is the prospect. There is no other outlook, if we cannot turn to Him and say, "Doubtless thou art our Father: Thy name is from everlasting." See you not how men are being taught by this loneliness and utter desolation what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God? Do you not see how the feeling of orphanhood, uncertainty, barrenness, coldness, and hopelessness are constraining the heart to cry out for the living God. 5. *Fierce temptations to evil drive many souls to God. (J. Leckie, D.D.)* **An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.**—*Saul troubled by an evil spirit*:—We see, especially in the history of Saul, the awful progress of the soul, from the gradual changes that take place in him, while in his successive trials evil prevails over the Spirit of grace and opportunities of good. There is also a sort of natural goodness about him that rivets our interest; so that from the very feeling of a common nature we are partly inclined to forget his crimes in his miseries. Scripture always speaks to us in history and life what it enjoins us in word and precept: our Lord says, "Hold fast, that no man take thy crown," and here before our eyes we see the choice and the crown transferred from one to another, and we see the reasons why—and the effect. Let us not put away from us this account of Saul as belonging to another state of things, for whatever it may speak to kings and nations, it is full of a home lesson for the heart of each. For may not each of us in the home of his own heart have an evil spirit that troubleth him? It may be so with many in various degrees who think not of it. The cares which most suffer are from this source. What is envy, covetousness, impatience, the plague of the heart, but this, that a man has in some degree, perhaps in years long past, sinned in this way; and so, not having repented, given place to an evil spirit that troubles and keeps him from God? This may be the case, and yet for awhile he may have much comfort in religion, as Saul had in the harp of David; Church music may in like manner soothe him and raise him up as it were to Heaven; or it may be impressive sermons; or even the study of God's holy Word; so much so that under the influence of these the evil spirit may depart, and he may be refreshed, nay, more, he may find rest in Christ. But this is not enough, unless he press forward earnestly, and give no place to such an inmate in his breast any more. Scripture reveals to us that there is in such cases a spiritual being, a living person, who takes possession of the mind. And I would particularly call attention to the expression of the text, "an evil spirit from the Lord." Now, although this is an awful expression, yet it is also full of instruction and comfort, as every thing must be which reminds us that we are in the hands of God; as we noticed in the history of Pharaoh. When we trace in our very disquietudes and sorrows the indications of an evil spirit that troubles us, this teaches us where our health is. That this evil spirit is from God is no proof that we are given up of Him. For, indeed, even David himself when he numbered the people had an evil spirit from God, allowed to bring upon him that temptation and its consequent misery. He can touch no one but as permitted of God; and that permission may be for various reasons: he was allowed to tempt Job for his greater perfection; through the false prophets he deluded Ahab to bring upon him God's judgment; he troubled Saul with gloom and pride on his departing from God; he tempted Judas that he might go to his own place; he prompted David to sin from which he speedily recovered by repentance. In like manner he is allowed to tempt us; and it is indeed sometimes, as in the case of Saul and of David, a judgment upon us for some fault on our part, or some secret unbelief or pride of heart, but we are

thus by this expression of the text taught to go to God for help. We cannot be too often urged in every way to do this. When you find in yourself any ill-will, any worldly disappointment or envious sadness, go to Him at once in earnest prayer, entreating Him to remove from you the power and guilt of that sin which has allowed the evil spirit to disquiet you. When you have thus done all in your power, then again the lesson of Saul and David will come in for your guidance, warning you not to take things into your own hands from impatience and distrust of God, but to wait patiently upon Him. He will have the remedy and deliverance to be entirely His own doing. He only wants your faith and confidence in Himself. And His word is "Be still then, and know that I am God." (*Isaac Williams, B.D.*) "*An evil spirit from the Lord*":—All great painters and poets whose works are of the first order have availed themselves of the force of contrast—that there should be a dark background to set forth some beautiful and radiant object. The Bible excels in its use of this striking method of laying emphasis. I. THE DAWN OF A FAIR PROMISE. "Samuel cried unto the Lord" for Saul, if haply he might arrest the terrible and imminent consequences of his sin. But he was made aware that prayer would not avail. It seemed as though Saul had already made the fatal choice, and had committed the sin which is unto death, and concerning which we have no encouragement to pray. The summons of the hour was, therefore, not to prayer, but to action. The Spirit of God bade Samuel go to Bethlehem, and among the sons of Jesse discover and anoint the new king. II. AN OVERCAST AFTERNOON. We have morning with David; afternoon with Saul. Here youth; there manhood, which has passed into prime. Here the promise; and there the overcast meridian of a wrecked life. You will notice that, whereas it is said that the Spirit of God descended upon David, we are told that "The Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul." That does not necessarily mean that all the religious life of Saul had become extinct, but that the special faculty and power by which he had been prepared for his kingly work was withdrawn from him. It is abundantly sure that the work which a man does in this world is not wrought only by the force of his genius, the brilliance of his intellect, or by those natural gifts with which God may have endowed him, but by a something beyond and behind all these—a spiritual endowment which is communicated by the Spirit of God for special office, and which is retained so long as the character is maintained. So Saul lost the special endowment of power which had enabled him to subdue his enemies and to order his kingdom. Secondly, we have the mysterious power of opening our nature to the Holy Spirit of God, who is the medium of communicating all the virtue, the energy, and the life of God; filling spirit, soul, and body; quickening the mind, warming the heart, elevating and purifying the whole moral life. We have also the awful alternative power of yielding ourselves to the evil spirits, or demon spirits, of which the spiritual sphere is full. It is affirmed that "an evil spirit from the Lord" troubled Saul. To interpret this aright we must remember that, in the strong, terse Hebrew speech, the Almighty is sometimes said to do what He permits to be done. And surely such is the interpretation here. When, therefore, we read that an evil spirit "from the Lord" troubled Saul, we must believe that, as Saul had refused the good and gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, and definitely chosen the path of disobedience, there was nothing for it but to leave him to the working of his own evil heart. III. THE LURID GLEAMS OF AN OVERCAST SKY. In 2 Sam. xxi. 2, you have this: "The king"—that is, David—"called the Gibeonites—(now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Ammorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)" Saul was smarting under Samuel's words, writhing under the sentence of deposition, and his soul was stirred to neutralise, if possible, the Divine verdict, so as to still keep the favour of God. It was true, and Saul knew it well, that he had failed in one distinct call to obedience; he had kept the choice of the spoil for himself—but why should he not, by excessive zeal in other directions, win back his lost inheritance? Now there were two such commandments which seem to have occurred to him. The one enacted that when the children of Israel entered the Land of Promise they should destroy all the people of the land. The Gibeonites, however, succeeded in securing that they should be excepted, because they had made a covenant with Joshua, and Joshua had sworn to them (*Josh. ix.*) The Gibeonites, therefore, had lived amongst the children of Israel for many centuries, and had become almost an integral part of the nation. But in his false zeal for God Saul seems to have laid ruthless hands upon these

peaceable people. Secondly, there was on the statute-book a very drastic law against necromancers and witches, and it was commanded that these should be exterminated from the land (Ex. xxii. 18.) Therefore, Saul turned his hand against them. In his heart he still believed in them. In order to show his zeal for God, and to extort the reversal of his sentence, he began to exterminate them. But as his edicts went forth, there was rottenness in his heart. While on the one hand, therefore, there was this outburst of lurid zeal for God, his own heart was becoming more and more enervated and evil. Do not we know this in our own experience? When one has fallen under the condemnation of conscience, the heart has endeavoured to whisper comfort to itself by saying, "I will endeavour to redeem any cause by an extravagance of zeal." We have plunged into some compensating work to neutralise the result of failure. It is zeal, but it is false; it is zeal, but it is strange fire; it is zeal, but it is self-originated; it is zeal, but it is only for self and not for God; it is zeal, but it is zeal for the letter, for the tradition, for the external form—it is not the zeal of the man who is eaten up and devoured by a passionate love for the Son of God, and for the souls He has made. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

Vers. 17, 18. Provide me now a man that can play well.—*The promotion of David*:—Sin is the harbinger of sorrow. A bad heart makes a troubled life. One sin may blight the fairest prospects and fill a palace with gloom. Saul's courtiers knew the cause of the king's depression, yet they did not counsel him to abandon his sins, and cry to God for mercy; but they said: "Command thy servants to seek out a man who is a skilful player on an harp." **I. THE FAME OF DAVID THE HARPER.** "I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is a skilful player, and a mighty, valiant man." David possessed four qualifications for the duties he was expected to discharge. 1. He was skilful. "A cunning player." True greatness reports itself. The right employment of our leisure moments may fit us for the most exalted positions in life. 2. He was courageous. "A mighty valiant man." Courage in the discharge of ordinary duties is a pledge of devotion in more responsible trusts. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful in much." 3. He was prudent. Men require various qualifications for the efficient performance of official duties—wisdom, tact, and prudence. 4. He was devout. "The Lord was with him." The inward work remains when the outward sign is lost. There was no oil left on David's head, but the work of grace was progressing in his heart. **II. THE JOURNEY OF DAVID THE HARPER.** "Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David, thy son, who is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul." 1. David's journey was undertaken by royal request. Saul sent for David. When God calls a man to a special work, He will make the way clear for him. God has access to every heart. A man's enemies may become his helpers. Preferment comes through the most unlikely persons, and in the most unexpected ways. 2. David's journey was undertaken in a loyal spirit. David did not run before he was sent, but immediately the summons came he was ready. **III. THE ARRIVAL OF DAVID THE HARPER.** "And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer." 1. David's introduction made a favourable impression on the king. "Saul loved him greatly." True men win the admiration and esteem of the wicked. Goodness is power. 2. David's services were speedily rewarded by the king. "He became his armour-bearer." The wicked prefer the services of the good. Worth wins. 3. David's acceptableness was openly acknowledged by the king. "He hath found favour in my sight." It is a good thing to be surrounded by religious influences. Devout men are a blessing to society. **IV. THE SUCCESS OF DAVID THE HARPER.** "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." 1. Notice Saul's depression. However exalted a man's position may be, sin will make him unhappy. Happiness or misery depends on the state of a man's heart. A bad heart makes a dark life. If the Holy Spirit leave us, the bad spirit will find us. A heart without God is like a universe without a sun. 2. Notice Saul's recovery. "So Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." (J. T. Woodhouse.) *The harper*:—For the first time we now see David come forth into publicity from his quiet, peaceful life. Already there begin to appear about him faint traces of that future greatness which in continuous un-

folding presented itself to the hopes of the thoughtful in Israel. Let us see how he came to King Saul and what he experienced at the king's court. We know that something sorrowful has happened. The king has sinned grievously. When Samuel charged him with his transgression, the whole impurity of his character came out to view. Instead of being led to resolve, with contrite heart, to seek the face of the Lord, he rather, like Cain, and afterwards Judas Iscariot, fled in terror still farther from Him. So it happened to him also at last, as it once did to the unhappy apostle. Through the righteous judgment of God, Satan was permitted to gain dominion over him. "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." These words are not to be understood as figurative, nor only as indicating a paroxysm of mental dejection, nor a darkening of his soul under the shadow of a great sadness, but open up before us a more dismal sphere than that of a natural melancholy. The power of darkness, which is personal, and in souls in the condition of that in which Saul's now was, finds all open for his operations, wrought in him with prevailing energy to deepen yet more and more that dreadful gulf which separated the king from Jehovah, yet, to increase the estrangement of the miserable man from God yet more and more, till it became a demoniacal hatred of God. What wonder, therefore, that we meet the king to-day in a state of mind which makes us scarcely able to recognise the man once so cheerful and vigorous in action. His eye appears fixed, his lips are violently compressed, and his whole countenance bespeaks a deep, bitter animosity and gloom. How could he have peace after he had put himself into hostility both with God and the world? The melancholy of the king naturally lay like a dark pall over the souls of all the courtiers, yea, spread its sorrowful, gloomy shadow even over the surrounding neighbourhood. "In the light of a king's countenance," says Solomon, "is life; but the wrath of a king is a messenger of death." The truth of this latter saying was now felt throughout almost the whole land. The royal servants advised this and that for the purpose of trying to set free from this dismal state of mind their high lord, whose palace was now more like a dull chamber of sorrow than the proud residence of a monarch. The accustomed scenes of revelry, shows, banquets, spectacles, dancing, and such like are denied to the servants. Then at last there occurred to them, as one would say, a "happy thought." They appeared before their master, and said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee: let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well." What a saying was this! Does not the penetration of these people, who, in forming a judgment regarding the melancholy of their master, did not look at the surface, but descended into the depths of the matter, excite our surprise? Are we not astonished at the far-reaching enlightenment which they here manifest in their knowledge of the existence of a world of fallen spirits, whom Jehovah is wont to make use of, not seldom, for putting to trial His own people, as well as for visiting with punishment the wicked? Must we not conclude that they were indeed already acquainted with the book of Job, and that it was a constituent part of their holy canonical books? What we further wonder at in the courtiers of King Saul is, first, the clearness with which they recognised demoniacal agency in the disconsolate condition of their master; then the frankness, combined, indeed, with the deepest respectfulness, with which they, regardless of the consequences which might arise to them from such a step, announced their opinion of his case, which was by no means flattering to him; and, finally, the suitableness of the counsel which they felt themselves constrained to give to him. They recommend to him the power of music as a means for relieving his mind, but with a wise, discriminating judgment regarding its character. There was, indeed, no lack of musicians at the court at Gibeah; but they appear to have been devoid of the qualifications which were at this time needed. The music which the servants of the king thought of was not that which pleases the world, and which only opens the door to unclean spirits, but such as, animated by a nobler inspiration, might insensibly elevate the soul by its harmonious melody, as on angels' wings, towards heaven. And when the king, as if in a waking dream, entered into the proposal of his well-meaning servants, and said to them, "Provide me a man that can play well on the harp, and bring him to me," one of them remarked, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him." He

who communicated it proved himself hereby to be a man of understanding, in that he placed in the foreground those qualities of the musician he recommended, which he believed would at once secure the favour of the king; but, on the contrary, that which was to him the chief matter, and by which he principally expected the deliverance of the king from the demon of dejection, viz., the piety of the harper, and the fact that God was with him, he mentioned last, as if it had been a trivial circumstance. It is, indeed, greatly to be desired that they who are called to the office of seeking to heal diseased souls, and to help into the right path those who have erred from the ways of morality, should not only possess piety, but also other mental endowments, such as are held in estimation by the world. And how frequently has the gospel, in such circumstances, proved itself to be a "power of God," which is a match for every influence which holds the soul in thralldom; and substantially, though with more lasting results, there has been frequently repeated what we here to-day see happen at the court of Gibeah. David at length reaches Gibeah, carrying his harp hanging on his shoulder-band, and is immediately introduced to the king. Here now they stand opposite each other—the one like the clear shining of the sun in spring, the other like a black thunder-cloud ominous of evil; the one full of blooming, hopeful life; the other, a dark spectre arising from the realm of death. It was a song without words whose soothing melody then fell upon the ear of the king. Words corresponding to the music would have effected the contrary result to that which was aimed at, and might even have increased the ill-temper of the king. There are even yet men enough of his sort—persons without faith, yea, at variance both with God and the world—whom solemn music is able most powerfully to delight, and in whom it awakens, at least for the time, dispositions which border on devotion and piety, while yet the words which correspond to the sacred melody would produce in them the very opposite effect. What is manifest from this, but that in the soul of such persons the last point at which they may be touched by that which is sacred, has not yet wholly decayed away? The sounds from David's harp had, for the moment at least, wrought a true miracle. "Did the music," we ask, "banish the demon?" Not so; but the higher frame of mind into which the king was brought by it sufficed to limit at least the sphere of the operation of the evil spirit within him; while a full, clear, conscious life of faith on the part of Saul, would have altogether destroyed the power of the wicked one. Besides, the silent intercessions which David sent up to heaven on the wings of the music of his harp must have contributed not a little to the results with which his melodies were crowned. It appeared to be God's purpose in sending David to the king, to afford to him a new and a last means of grace. He must become conscious of what a man of childlike piety, such as David, is able, by the help of God, to do against all the powers of darkness; and, in the way of such an experience, he ought himself to have been won to a life of piety. But, alas! all the efforts to deliver the unhappy man were fruitless. One of our great secular poets has imagined what an elevating, yea, sanctifying power, may dwell in a God-consecrated music. He represents the hero of his poem as saved from an assault of darkest thoughts by harmonies of a sacred choir sounding out from a neighbouring cathedral into his chamber. But the poet did not understand the rich harmonious music before which the power of all evil spirits must yield, not for a passing moment only, but for ever. This is the music of the holy gospel. (*F. W. Krummacher, D.D.*) *The harper foreshadowing the Psalmist*:—The nature of the malady that afflicted Saul, and that was overcome for a time by the soothing influence of David's harp, has been copiously illustrated from history. A whole book was written on the subject by a learned professor at Wittenberg, illustrating the remarkable power of music in soothing both mental and bodily ailments. Kitto and other writers have added more recent instances. One is a case mentioned, among many others, in the *Mémoires* of the French Royal Academy of Sciences for 1707—that of a person seized with a fever which threw him into a violent and raging delirium, and for which music proved an effectual remedy. When the music was discontinued, the symptoms returned; but by frequent repetitions of the experiment, during which the delirium always ceased, the power of the disease was broken, and the habits of a sound mind re-established. Six days sufficed to accomplish the cure. Another case is that of Charles IX. of France, of whom it is said that after the massacre of St. Bartholomew his sleep was wont to be disturbed by nightly horrors, and he could only be composed to rest by a symphony of singing boys. Still more striking and more like that of Saul, is the case of another royal personage, Philip V. of Spain. He was seized

with deep dejection of spirits, which totally indisposed and unfitted him for all public duty and appearances. A celebrated musician, Farinelli, was invited to Spain; and on his arrival it was contrived that there should be a concert in a room adjoining the king's apartment, in which the artist should perform one of his most captivating songs. The king, says Kitto, appeared surprised at first, then greatly moved; and at the end of the second air, he summoned the musician to his apartment, and loading him with compliments and caresses, asked him how he could reward such talents, assuring him that he could refuse him nothing. The musician answered that he desired only that his Majesty would allow himself to be shaved and dressed (which hitherto he had obstinately refused to be), and that he would endeavour to make his appearance in the council as usual. The king yielded; from this time his disease gave way, and the musician had all the honour of the cure. We may readily believe that that harp in its soothing power was not inferior to any of the other instruments to which allusion has been made. Still, with all its temporary success, it was but a humble and ineffective method of soothing a troubled spirit, compared to the methods which David was afterwards to employ. It dealt chiefly, if not exclusively, with man's animal nature. It did not deal with man as an intellectual and moral being; it did not strike at the root of all trouble—alienation from God; it did not attempt to apply the only permanent and effectual remedy for trouble—restoration to His favour and fellowship. It was a mere foreshadow, on a comparatively low and earthly ground, of the wondrous way in which David, as the Psalmist, was afterwards to provide the true "oil of joy for the mourner," and to become a guide to the downcast soul from "an horrible pit and the miry clay," up to the third heaven of joy and peace. The temporary calm which the soft notes of David's harp spread over the stormy soul of Saul was but a superficial emotion compared to the holy rest, on the bosom of their God, to which the Psalms have guided many an anxious and weary sinner. It was like the passing emotion of an Oratorio, compared to the deep peace of the Gospel. Nor is the contrast less striking between the results of the two kinds of repose. Under the soothing influence of David's harp, Saul might have calmness enough to plan a few useful measures, or to execute a few needed reforms; but under the influence of the holy rest into which many a believer has been guided by the Psalmist, some of the greatest victories have been gained over sinful tendencies, and some of the highest achievements of the new nature have been realised. The prisoner, soothed to patience and contentment in his dismal dungeon; the tortured confessor nerved in the hour of fiery trial to regardlessness of man; the martyr, elevated to a sublime contempt alike of worldly pains and worldly joys; have all, in these great victories, exemplified the influence of the tranquillising yet elevating spirit that breathes out from the Psalms, and seems to say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!" (*W. G. Blaikie, M.A.*)

A young man:—It is noteworthy that the character of David, as given in this verse, is from the mouth of a servant; from a human standpoint, it was simply the reputation he had among those about him. 1. First of all, he was "cunning in playing." David all this time had no idea, of course, of how by this very skill, and by the means of his enemy Saul, the road to the throne was to be opened to him. It is often when a young fellow really hands himself over to God, body, soul, and spirit to be used by Him, that he sees how even in his unconverted days God had His plan of preparation in the thing that he did. He sees this by the light God has now shed on his life's track—a light that will never fade. Now, is there not many a young fellow who is not cultivating even his own natural abilities, who is not developing what is already in him? And the Gospel quite encourages this cultivation: it does not say to us, "Be so heavenly-minded that you can't touch a flute." 2. David was fond of music, with all the soothing and refining influences it brings—he loved it—but at the same time he was "a mighty valiant man." And it is worth while noticing how the two things are put side by side. I like the combination. We are apt to think that those who have a turn for music, and develop it, are soft men, mere carpet-knights, fit only for drawing-rooms and small concerts, without grip and sinew and muscle. Such, at all events, was not the case with David, and God knew it when He chose him. God is always looking out for capable men, so keep yourself up to the mark—develop all that is in you. David was a brave spirit, too—"a man of war." He had the grand and wonderful combination of the suavity with the fortiter. How many of us have this? There are some of you, I grant, who have quite enough of the flint about you, and whom I shouldn't care to thwart or cross, but what about the soft side of your nature?

Others, again, are all soft, and haven't a bit of the flint at all, though it will have to come in and on you before you'll make much progress, either as regards this world or the next. David was brave, outspoken, and manly. He was "prudent in matters." This point will come home to many of you if the foregoing haven't. Perhaps you have no taste for music, and you haven't had a chance to cultivate or display your bravery like him. But here is prudence—this is a thing you find you need right in your every-day life. It seems to be just the next thing to the Grace of God. David had it, and by it he reined in his burning and ardent convictions, which would otherwise, perhaps, have borne him to destruction. When we sit down to a game of chess or draughts we need, in order to win the game, not so much great dashes, but simply prudence and watchfulness. A lush falls on yourself and your partner, and the excitement is just enough to call forth all your powers, but if you mean to do well it will not go the length of making you nervous or fumbling, or cause that dimness in hand and eye which ends in a blunder. So it is in life: we ought to be keenly alive to what is going on around us, and of our position in the midst. I fear that oft-times from our young men trying to be too supernatural, they fall beneath the level of average commonsense, which they would have avoided had they but exercised a little prudence. 4. David was also "a comely person." Some of you may not be so, and are not to blame for your physique, for you had not the making of yourselves, but don't you think you might be a little better than you are? We ought to train and develop our bodies. I never did so much tossing the caber, or putting the stone, or used the dumb-bells to such an extent as after I was converted. I felt then that I had a body that wanted looking after. David was a fine, strapping, stalwart fellow, "ruddy and good to look to," and we also ought to be as comely as God intended we should be. 5. Now we come to the point; not as in the case of Naaman—"he was a leper"—but "the Lord was with him." Can we meet David here? Have we got the supernatural as well as the natural? We have the same chance here at all events, as he had, if in all the other respects he stands alone. He accepted the Lord when He came to him on Samuel's feet, and without Him he would have been a mere skilful player and valiant man, that was all. But the Grace within could not be hid. It would not, and permeated far and wide. It was the common report that he was a good and religious fellow. For, remember again, that this is the estimate of him by one of those among whom he was. God grant that we too may so live that the world may say of us, "There is something good about that man." (*John McNeill.*) *Early years of David*:—I. SOME REMARKS ON DAVID'S EARLY LIFE, AND ON HIS CHARACTER AS THEREIN DISPLAYED. David's anointing was followed by no other immediate mark of God's favour. He was tried by being sent back again, in spite of the promise, to the care of his sheep, till an unexpected occasion introduced him to Saul's court. David came in the power of that sacred influence whom Saul had grieved and rejected. The Spirit which inspired his tongue guided his hand also, and his sacred songs became a medicine to Saul's diseased mind. Saul "loved David greatly, and he became his armour-bearer;" but the first trial of his humility and patience was not over, while many other trials were in store. After a while he was a second time sent back to his sheep. An accident, as it appeared to the world, brought him forward. I need not relate how he was divinely urged to engage the giant, how he killed him, and how he was, in consequence, again raised to Saul's favour; who, with an infirmity not inconsistent with the deranged state of his mind, seems to have altogether forgotten him. From this time began David's public life; but not yet the fulfilment of the promise made to him by Samuel. He had a second and severer trial of patience to endure for many years; the trial of "being still" and doing nothing before God's time, though he had (apparently) the means in his hands of accomplishing the promise for himself. It was to this trial that Jeroboam afterwards showed himself unequal. He, too, was promised a kingdom, but he was tempted to seize upon it in his own way, and so forfeited God's protection. David's victory over Goliath so endeared him to Saul that he would not let him go back to his father's house. Repeated attempts on his life drove David from Saul's court; and for some years after, that is, till Saul's death, he was a wanderer upon the earth, persecuted in that country which was afterwards to be his own kingdom. Like Abraham, he traversed the land of promise "as a strange land," waiting for God's good time. Nay, far more exactly, even than to Abraham, was it given to David to act and suffer that life of faith which the Apostle describes, and by which "the elders obtained a good report." By faith he wandered about, "being destitute,

afflicted, evil-entreated, in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." On the other hand, through the same faith, he "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." II. NOW, THEN, LET US CONSIDER WHAT WAS, AS FAR AS WE CAN UNDERSTAND, HIS ESPECIAL GRACE, WHAT IS HIS GIFT; as faith was Abraham's distinguishing virtue, meekness the excellence of Moses, self-mastery the gift especially conspicuous in Joseph. This question may best be answered by considering the purpose for which he was raised up. (1 Sam. xiii. 14.) The office to which first Saul and then David were called was different from that with which other favoured men before them had been intrusted. From the time of Moses, when Israel became a nation, God had been the king of Israel, and His chosen servants, not delegates, but mere organs of His will. Moses did not direct the Israelites by his own wisdom, but he spake to them, as God spake from the pillar of the cloud. Joshua, again, was merely a sword in the hand of God. Samuel was but His minister and interpreter. God acted, the Israelites "stood still and saw" His miracles, then followed. But, when they had rejected Him from being king over them, then their chief ruler was no longer a mere organ of His power and will, but had a certain authority entrusted to him, more or less independent of supernatural direction; and acted, not so much from God, as for God, and in the place of God. David, when taken from the sheepfolds "to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance," "fed them," in the words of the Psalm, "with a faithful and true heart; and ruled them prudently with all his power." From this account of his office, it is obvious that his very first duty was that of fidelity to Almighty God in the trust committed to him. Saul had neglected his Master's honour; but David, in this an eminent type of Christ, "came to do God's will" as a viceroy in Israel, and, as being tried and found faithful, he is especially called "a man after God's own heart." David's peculiar excellence, then, is that of fidelity to the trust committed to him; a firm, uncompromising, single-hearted devotion to the cause of his God, and a burning zeal for His honour. There is a resemblance between the early history of David and that of Joseph. Both distinguished for piety in youth, the youngest and the despised of their respective brethren, they are raised, after a long trial, to a high station, as ministers of God's Providence. Joseph was tempted to a degrading adultery; David was tempted by ambition. Both were tempted to be traitors to their masters and benefactors. Surely the blessings of the patriarchs descended in a united flood upon "the lion of the tribe of Judah," the type of the true Redeemer who was to come. He inherits the prompt faith and magnanimity of Abraham; he is simple as Isaac; he is humble as Jacob; he has the youthful wisdom and self-possession, the tenderness, the affectionateness, and the firmness of Joseph. And, as his own especial gift, he has an overflowing thankfulness, an ever-burning devotion, a zealous fidelity to his God, a high unshaken loyalty towards his king, an heroic bearing in all circumstances, such as the multitude of men see to be great, but cannot understand. (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *A young man from the country*:—Now, many testimonials which young men carry about with them are hardly worth the paper on which they are written; but this certificate of character is so genuine and so comprehensive that it is worth our looking into for a little. In our passage we meet with David as still but a young man; and there are five distinct things mentioned about him, which you may find it interesting and useful to consider. I. I wish to say something to you about HIS PERSON, his pleasing and attractive presence or address. Some one says to me, "You may pass over this matter, it is a point of little importance." I beg your pardon; it is not a point of little importance. A man may have a very shabby exterior, and yet be a true nobleman. M. Renan speaks of St. Paul disrespectfully indeed, but perhaps truthfully, as "the ugly little Jew;" and yet, we all know that though "his bodily presence" may have been "weak," that man had moral weight enough to shake the world. There are deformed men, and dwarfs, and cripples, who command instant and profound respect; whilst there are fine-looking, strapping fellows, who are only big boobies. Sometimes, though the casket is very poor, there is a glorious jewel within. Perhaps you would be surprised to see, in running through the Bible, how frequent is the allusion to bodily form. Why, I could give you quite a string of names of persons, both male and female, who are described as having been "comely" to look to. The body, no doubt, is but the tabernacle, the shell; but don't despise it; it bears the stamp and image of God. He was "a young man from the country." None the worse for that. As I read the story of his life, I

smell the breath of the new-mown hay, and I hear the bleatings on the Bethlehem hills. A good many of us have come from the country. And some are silly enough to be ashamed of it. Be proud of it. Be proud if you know all about yoking the horses and herding the cattle, or even (as Mr. Gladstone said one day when addressing the young men of Glasgow University) about blowing the country forge, or keeping the toll-gate. II. But now for a few words, secondly, upon his **PASTIME**. Every sensible man must have some pastime. We cannot be always working. We are not mere mechanics; both body and mind demand occasional relaxation. In the LXX version of the Old Testament—that copy of it from which our Lord and His Apostles generally quoted—I find, strange to say, an additional Psalm to the hundred and fifty in our Bibles. It is entitled “A genuine Psalm of David.” “Small was I among my brethren, and youngest in my father’s house; I tended my father’s sheep. My hands formed a musical instrument, and my fingers tuned a psalter. And who shall tell my Lord? The Lord Himself, He hears. He sent forth His angel, and took me from my father’s sheep, and He anointed me with the oil of His anointing. My brothers were handsome and tall; but the Lord did not delight in them. I went forth to meet the Philistine, and he cursed me by his idols. But I drew his own sword and beheaded him, and removed reproach from the children of Israel. Praise ye the Lord.” Well, I want you to observe that David consecrated this great gift of his to the highest ends, and that he found music to be most enjoyable when it was linked with sacred themes. What a pity that so sublime a gift is often prostituted to ignoble ends! What a shame that it is so frequently consecrated to the devil! And what vile rubbish you do sometimes listen to under the name of music! The grand chorales of Luther did quite as much as his preaching to arouse the people from their slumber of spiritual death. Now, hundreds of you are crazy about music. It is your chief pastime. And an elevating one it is, if wisely directed and controlled. III. I point you now to his **PATRIOTISM**. The text calls him “a mighty valiant man, and a man of war;” but I must have you notice that David’s courage and chivalry were not confined to camps and battlefields, but characterised his whole life. If ever man loved his country it was he. If ever there was a noble, chivalrous, magnanimous, unselfish spirit it was he. His heroic fearlessness of danger was constantly put to the proof. True men, nature’s noblemen, are scarce; and Goldsmith was right when he said:—

“Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
When wealth accumulates, and men decay.”

A healthy and unselfish public spirit needs to be cultivated. We want a larger number of young men who, not content to see their country’s honour and weal in the hands of a select few, are ambitious of contributing their quota to the formation of a healthy public opinion; and will willingly bear burdens, and take rubs, and forego conveniences, if they can in any way advance the national welfare. There must be some here who well remember how, during the Franco-Prussian War, many a young German, knowing his country was likely to be invaded, hurried home from a safe and lucrative position in England and America, to take his place in the line of battle, and, if need be, pay the penalty with his life. And when the war rolled over into France, many a young Frenchman went from quiet homes in distant and safe parts of his own land, to march with disorganised armies, and under doubtful generalship, through great and constant hardships; destined, alas! to find in a few weeks a nameless grave. Well, they only did their duty. And I am as certain as I am of my own existence that there are scores of young patriots here, who, under similar circumstances, would do precisely the same. There are bloodless achievements within the reach of all of you, by which you can nobly serve your fatherland. Ay, there are battles to be fought in Cornhill and Lombard Street, in Manchester and Liverpool, and thousands of other places at home, that demand a perseverance, a pluck, and a heroism quite as great as though you were summoned, with rifle and knapsack, to the jungles of Burmah or the mountains of Afghanistan. IV. I point you now to his **PRUDENCE**. The text describes him as “prudent in matters”—i.e., a young man of sound judgment, of sterling common-sense. This is a wonderful recommendation to a man, no matter what kind of office he has to fill. Next to piety—and we are coming to that immediately—there is no endowment more valuable than what in England goes by the name of

good common-sense. "Prudent in matters." This word "prudent" is just a contradiction of "provident," and provident literally means looking before you, providing for the future. The one hundred and twelfth Psalm is just a portrait of a wise and generous man; and in it David says that such a person will "guide his affairs with discretion," and in consequence, "will not be afraid of evil tidings." If you are prudent in your affairs you will not spend all you earn upon immediate gratification, but will endeavour to make some provision for after days, and for those who possibly may be dependent on you. I suppose there were no life insurance offices in those early times, or I feel sure David would have taken a wise step, which I urge upon every young man; and the sooner you take it the better. V. And last point of all, David's PIETY—"And the Lord is with him." He was "a man after God's own heart." The breathings of his soul in these wonderful Psalms have for ages been, in the whole Christian Church—alike Greek, Latin, Puritan, and Anglican—the chosen expression of the most profound devotion. Now you may have all the other qualifications described here, yet, if you lack this, you are awfully incomplete; you cannot be presented to the King, nor stand, harp in hand, before His face in glory. A friend was one day speaking to the late learned Dr. Duncan, of Edinburgh, about religious life in England, and was contrasting southern theology with the robust and stern orthodoxy of Scotland, and he let fall the expression, "It is like a limpet, it has no bone in it." "Ah, well," replied Dr. Duncan, "a limpet is not a strong thing, but it cleaves fast to the rock." Cleave to the rock, and you will not be swept away by those strong currents of error or torrents of temptation which are sure to sweep around you. Decide what the principles of your life are to be, and stand by them at any cost. Have more manliness than to heed the jeers of the scoffer. The world is always for compromise; compromise between truth and error, between right and wrong. If a man dies for his flag, the world calls him a hero; but if he is prepared to die for a principle, it calls him a fanatic. Yet the latter is the nobler of the two. (J. T. Davidson, D.D.)

Ver 19. **Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.**—*Life of David*:—The formal induction of David into the office for which he was selected, was not devoid of its appointed influence. The ceremony was a sacred one, by special direction of God, performed by a sacred hand in the days of miraculous agency, days long since passed away. Consequently a marked alteration occurred in the whole character of this lowly shepherd boy. It was not conversion, for David, you remember, before this ceremony, was conversant with godliness, and replete with spiritual and legitimate piety. We may call this alteration or improvement, devotedness; he was warned of the purposes of Providence concerning his future life, and hence became, by a noble ambition, as well as by supernatural gifts, devoted to the destiny, the high appointment to which he was ordained. After the interview with Samuel, David resumed his former position and avocation, but with new thoughts, new hopes, and new practices. His life was still a private one, but the virtues of an exalted mind, and of increased piety, displayed themselves with such fullness that the respect of all men was tendered to him in tributary homage. 1. Here is a volume of wisdom opened to us. We have a double calling—one to future dignity in God's set time, another to present duty in our earthly state. Our wisdom, then, our duty, our religion, is to realise, by sober contemplation, the heaven that awaits us. We have not here to follow the guidance of mere fancy; we have not here the deceitful rule of passion, to observe which will paint a paradise, according to each man's peculiar lust. We have the solemn and copious narrative of revelation; the history of successive periods yet to come; of gradation above gradation in eternal glory for the saints; of resurrection joy, millennial glory with Christ, abiding favour with the Father; of physical happiness, as well as filial consolations; of a promised land, a better country, a heavenly city, of many mansions. Our other calling is to glorify God in that station where His Providence has placed us. The description of David, while he remained a commoner, signifies that he had given himself, with every diligence as a man in ordinary life, to discharge his office, to the very best of his ability, religiously. The devices of the enemy are innumerable, to prevent our success in piety, our utility to man, and our honourableness to God. We must understand thoroughly that in spite of all contrary exhibitions and persuasions, suggested by our infirmities, that the post we occupy is exactly that in which we are placed, to stand fast and quit ourselves like men. That our ages, callings, situations, for-

tunes, are just the very ordinances of Jehovah, and that in these things, and no others, we are required to show forth His glory, and magnify His name. Thus did David. 2. We must thus conclude our considerations about his private life, and follow him out upon the great stage of the world. But ere we view him on that stage we must observe that his exaltation occurred in exact accordance with his private virtues. These spread abroad his fame, sent it to the king's palace, and led him from obscurity. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." "Godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come." The command for David's separation from the humble lot in which he had enjoyed so much of a happy converse with heaven, has arrived—"Send me David thy son, who is with the sheep." Thus were the unsolicited promises of Samuel hastening to fulfilment. David had not sought greatness, and we may conclude that this call to another mode of life, so dissimilar to all his early habits, was obeyed, not with the alacrity of ambition, but the integrity of religion. He obeyed, because he felt it to be his duty. He must henceforth find his interviews with God diminished, and his intimacy with an evil world a source of continual danger, and cause of continual self-restraint and watchfulness. In the life of the believer, all things have their appointed use, according to the words—"All things work together for good, to them who love God." Solitude, or retirement rather, had witnessed the first dawn of piety in this servant of God, and confirmed it in every principle, up to the full blaze of faith, and courage, and devotedness. Now society, and society in the most dangerous form, in the very circle of the court, must train the future monarch for his onerous responsibilities. (1.) It was a more difficult task by far to combat the influence of flattery, now heaped on David. He was an accomplished youth, of goodly appearance, graced, too, with all the freshness of innocence and piety, and the prime favourite of the king; it is said here, "be loved him greatly." These things were so many attractions to flattery, so many inlets to the poison of pride, which kills the soul of the unconverted, and which, when it gains admission to the hearts of the children of God, requires for them a discipline of misery, to expel the moral pestilence. (2.) Another risk must now be encountered, the power of prevailing levity. Man in solitude is serious, in society is often a mocker. Whether it be the courage which springs from fellowship, or the poor ambition of obtaining notoriety amongst his fellows, that stirs a man to levity, it is always true that the society of ordinary men is ruled by levity—a reckless disregard for things Divine, or a wild and boisterous exuberance of mirth, where piety dare not appear. Courts are composed of men, not always of the best men, and so he, whose infancy and early youth had been imbued with the deepest reverence for the mysteries and truth of revelation, had now to brook the wild scorn of the infidel, or the injurious babble and enervating levity of the gay and thoughtless sycophants of greatness. We must watch here, against the influence of the world's irreligion upon ourselves, it is our hour of temptation. (3.) Lastly, David had to encounter worldliness—that is, the predominant vice in the vicinity of kings. A spiritual man may loathe all this; but repetition blunts his first feelings of abhorrence. Far from the precincts of the court we may pass the residue of our earthly period, but there are agencies abroad to raise within us the love of this evil world, and increase it, too, as that world is fading from our grasp. (*C. M. Fleury, A.M.*)

Ver. 21. And David came to Saul, and stood before him.—*Life in a palace*:—1. We see one seated on a throne, and yet not happy. We see his royal magnificence, and just as plainly we see his knitted brow and wild eye. Let our riches be ever so great, we are not rich enough to buy a house into which trouble cannot come. We wish, with a deep, restless eagerness, for more of the world. Our secret feeling is, that our pains are well spent if the outcome be that we stand higher in the world, or grasp more of it. We are sure that happy circumstances shall bring happiness into our heart. Let us but climb the throne, and we shall sit down pleased. Vain, then, were the lordliest mansion reared for us, and crowded with friends, and stored with plenty, if we already have not a happy heart. "The heart is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." A heart at one with God, and like His, is the only spring of true joy. Such a heart has God's smile for its light. His praise and the hope of His glory make a music that never wears us. All outward pleasure is brightened by the bliss within. 2. Once more we turn our

eyes on the king, and we see one healed by the world and yet not cured. We see David as he lifts his harp and strikes the strings, and we mark how the music softens the hard lines in that troubled face, and brings a glint of pleasure into that gloomy eye. We see the world's medicine in conflict with man's worst ailment. For the king is not ill in body, but in spirit. His spiritual health is ruined, and the flickering goodness that is left only shows him what might have been, and what ought to be, without arousing any will or power to change. He is fatally sick in spirit, but he does not seek a cure by returning to breathe the pure air of Divine truth, and to exercise himself in holy doings. He catches at the advice of his lords, and calls for music. Since the worldly pleasures he has do not please, he is fain to try yet another. And the harp in the skilful hand of David does drive away the throng of vexing thoughts. For the time he enjoys a higher and calmer mood. He indeed is healed by the world, but he is not cured. That is an instance of how the world treats its stricken ones. It can only prescribe the medicine which it has. It offers amusements, business, ambitions, and the like as the cure for ills that are in the spirit, and deeper than such things can go. It is successful in thrilling the nerves, in engrossing the energies, and in thus turning a man's thought away from himself. He is happy, as the sleeper is happy in his dreams. Let the young put themselves beforehand on guard against the world's nostrums for spiritual ills. A harp—a harp is the charm for a spirit in which heaven and hell are at war and eternity at stake! Go not to one who does but trifle with death. If no saintly Samuel is known to you, from whose goodly wisdom you may win guidance, then all the more keenly listen to God Himself, as at the very centre of your being He echoes the words of Jesus, and sends you to that sole Physician of the spirit. Face to face to the sated but unsatisfied man of the world there stands a robust youth. As yet he is fresh to the city and the court. He has been spoken of to the king as a brave and accomplished man. As we look further, and think of his life heretofore and its results, we see a like contrast to the history and character of Saul. 3. We see one who links lowly duty with lofty hope. David felt the stirrings of genius, and the anointing had confirmed him in high hopes, yet he did not despise his crook. He was not for ever grumbling that such a clever fellow as he should be condemned to common toil. In the full expectancy of a great future he gave his best energy to the lowly business which now was duty. And the duty of to-day is ever God's apprenticeship of us for the greater things of the morrow. To kick at the lowly work set before us is to kick down the ladder God has brought to our feet. See how David rose by fidelity to the present. But, unfaltering in his hope, he was not hurried away by it. He did not let it carry him off to the court or the camp in chase of fortune. He bade his eager spirit bide its time. And now, in the due time of God's choosing, and still but following the duty of the hour, David has taken another step forward. He has come to be Saul's minstrel. Let us be faithful to the calls of each day as they come, and we too shall grow royal and reach our own throne. Jehovah is no respecter of persons, but deals with us as wisely and as lovingly as He dealt with His servant David. 4. We see one who links pleasant leisure with rich profit. The shepherd's day was long, but it was not without many spare moments. In that solitude which was full of God this man, like others called to lofty tasks, was made great. Slowly he was ennobled and made royal in heart. Without having seen the court, he had a grace which indeed no earthly palace could have given. Not for David alone, but for every youth, fate lies hid in those leisure hours. As he deals with them he is dealing with his whole future. Out of them shall spring his fortune in this life and in the next. Who makes himself worthy of success shall find it at last coming to meet him by the way on which he journeys. And, just as surely, the time which is not filled with good is room kept for evil. It is not merely that the man robs himself of the accomplishments and character and capabilities which might have been his. For lack of noble interests and patient work he deteriorates. He falls beneath himself. And, looking back on this subject, let us be warned from Saul to distrust the world for our peace. Let us copy David and make the Lord our portion. Jehovah is now more easily known and more readily found than in those ancient days. (*David Burns.*) *David before the King*:—1. This is a melancholy picture! The collapse of what gave promise of being a brilliant career is very affecting, particularly when it is the result of moral failure (1 Sam. x. 2). What contrast could be sharper than that, which is expressed by the words, "The

Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (ver. 14)! 2. But to turn to the other side, how mysterious are the methods of Divine Providence! The successor of Saul is admitted into his presence on account of his musical capabilities. Thus natural gifts were made to subserve Divine purposes. Little did David think, when he was playing in the tent of Jesse, that the pastime was a preparation for his future destiny; and evidently little did Jesse think that the youngest of his sons was the one who should be "taken from the sheepfolds" to feed Israel. I. SAUL'S CONDITION. 1. First, he was in a state of dejection. I use the word "dejection," because it is a stronger term than "depression;" "depression is but a degree of dejection" (Crabb). Then dejection seems to be oftentimes measured by the height of previous exaltation, and so to be a very suitable term in the case of Saul. Wordsworth says:—

"As high as we have mounted in delight,
In our dejection do we sink as low."

There are those who would go further than this, and describe the king as suffering from "melancholia," and the hypochondriacal form of it. Perhaps the tendency is too common to attribute moral disease to mental. Saul was a disappointed man, and became the prey of his evil passions. 2. But this is only a part of the matter. Saul's miserable condition is attributed in the Bible to the workings of an "evil spirit." It is a very unwarrantable method of dealing with the statements of holy Scripture, to assert that this is only the Jewish way of saying Saul was mad. No one can read the New Testament accounts of demoniacs, or our Lord's words as to devil-possession, and be satisfied with such an explanation. The same words describe the departure of the Spirit of God, and the arrival of an evil spirit. 3. Again, this spirit is said to be "from the Lord," for even over evil spirits God has sovereignty. Satan could not tempt Job without Divine permission and Divine restrictions; his emissaries must therefore be allowed by God to tempt or torment man. This was a part of Saul's punishment; as, bodily and mental disorders are often the penalties of personal sin. II. DAVID'S REMEDY. 1. Saul, when these spiritual paroxysms were upon him, was soothed and calmed by the sweet strains from David's harp. Commentators say, that this power of music is well known. 2. Such an effect bears testimony to the source from which music had been said to come—the land of peace. Newman could not believe that such effects as music wrought could be produced by that which is "unsubstantial" and transitory. Similarly, Kingsley says, "Music has been called the speech of angels." Music is a language, a universal language, which appeals to the heart of man; and as it gives expression to every feeling and emotion, so it has the power of calling every movement of the soul into play. 3. But they were the strains of David's harp alone which allayed the commotion in Saul's spirit, and drove off the evil influence. There is music and music. There is music which elevates and calms and spiritualises; and there is music which stirs evil passions and excites sensuous impulses. It is music which appeals to what is Divine in man, and lifts up his thoughts and affections to the "far-off land," which has the power by its stern sweetness of pacifying the passions, and dissipating the gloom which hides the face of God. III. LESSONS. 1. To take warning from the history of Saul, lest through unfaithfulness to God we should forfeit the opportunities of service which He gives us, and so through disappointment become the prey of evil passions and evil powers. 2. To realise the need of watchfulness (Eph. vi. 12). 3. That music in the service of the sanctuary is not for purposes of entertainment, but to lift up the soul to God. 4. Finally, we may surely, with the mystical interpreter, see an image in this incident of the work of Christ, the true David, the Prince of Peace, who came to deliver mankind from the tyranny of Satan, and to restore to peace and harmony those who were distracted by divers lusts and passions; and further, inquire whether we have obtained that peace which Christ came to bring. (*Canon Hutchings*.) *The Sweet Psalmist in the Court of Saul*:—The scene changes. We are no longer sitting among the sheep with David, watching the departure of the prophet, and the dispersion of the guests; we are not now among the home-circle in Jesse's house, but in the court of Gibeah. Here is state and grandeur and Eastern magnificence. The king has evidently all the absolute power of an Eastern monarch. But these things will make no man happy; for we read (ver. 24): "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil

spirit from the Lord troubled him." Is it so? that powers and talents are taken from one man and given to another? Are we so far stewards of all our faculties, that if we misuse or abuse them, God will transfer them to our neighbour? The kingdom was taken from Saul, so Samuel had told him, and was given to another. You recollect what our Lord says in the parable of the pounds: "And he said to them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." The more you act as faithful stewards of your money, your talents, and your faculties, the more God will commit to your trust. But if, like the unjust steward, you "waste your Lord's goods," then you will lose what you have, and be no longer stewards. Sin draws after it many consequences. Little did Saul think that he should lose the kingdom, when he spared the king of the Amalekites; and he never could have foreseen that fearful visitation that was coming on him. Boast not of your gifts or your mental powers; it needs but for God to remove His hand, and what a multitude of evil spirits may possess our souls! It is only by God's will that we live? What a contrast between Saul returning from the slaughter of the Ammonites, and Saul, as now, a prey to fits of mental derangement! Yes, we are in God's hands, and everything is at His disposal. Now we may be conscious of some power of mind, and a consciousness of power, of course, gives pleasure. But a stroke of paralysis might lay us prostrate in a moment; the faculty of speech, the faculty of memory, might be taken from us, and we be enfeebled in mind for the rest of our days. This affliction of Saul's is called "an evil spirit from the Lord." The Spirit of the Lord was gone from Saul, gone because of his sin; and the evil spirit from God had come upon him. The servants prescribe only a half-remedy: the music may drive away his sadness, may restore the balance of his mind; but this, because it cannot bring back the favour of God, will not restore peace to his soul. Only the gospel can give real comfort. And now one of the servants of Saul, perhaps a man with more religious feeling than the rest, mentions David's name. And so David is sent for to the court of Saul. God's purposes are sure to come to pass. When Moses was forty years old, he thought the time had come for him to deliver his brethren; but there were to be forty years of discipline yet both for him and them. When Saul was arrested by the vision on the road to Damascus, he was told of God's designs about him; but many years passed before he was ordained to the apostleship. David's faith and patience were put to the test in the interval that elapsed between his anointing and his summons to the court; and now, in a very humble capacity indeed, he enters the palace: he is nothing more than a musician, and afterwards made one of the body-guard. Music has a wonderful power over the spirit. Saul felt its influence, and his spirit was "refreshed," but he remained the same character; his soul was in no way the better for it. It is very difficult to distinguish between natural sentiment and religious enthusiasm, between genuine spiritual ecstasy and mere sensuous delight. God forbid our church music should not be good of its kind! We ought to offer the best of everything to God; only with this passage in Saul's life before us, let us be careful that while we delight in the singing, we are not insensible to the deep meaning of the words. When you think that a musical service has really been a blessing to your soul, then ask yourself these questions: "Have I been humbled in my own eyes?" "Do I loathe myself?" "Is Christ more precious to me as the Saviour who has died for me?" and "Do I feel more abhorrence of the sin that is close and natural to me?" For if you have been excited, but not really moved to humiliation and prayer, the musical service will only have strengthened your natural propensities; and though I say nothing against the singing of the Psalms of David, yet I say this—and that in the face of the musical taste of the present day—that the effect of a high musical service upon some natures may be baneful in the extreme. God has given to some of you great talents; mind that, like David, you use them to His glory. Have you beauty? Have you intellect? Have you musical talent? Thank God for every gift: but remember that it is a trust: you may use it in the service of God, or in the devil's service. (*C. Bosanquet, M.A.*)

Ver. 23. So that Saul was refreshed and was well.—*The minstrel physician*:—Long and varied was to be David's education for the throne. His shepherd experience had been one of his schoolmasters. And now acquaintance

with the Court, and the glimpse it gave him into the duties of government and the nation's condition, was to be another. At Court, too, he was to learn the poverty of human power. Was not King Saul bound in the cords of misery, and one of the poorest, because wretchedest, men in that or any other kingdom? Thus the King-elect was being prepared for his future eminence. But how came he at Court? By no seeking of his own. The youth had become a man. And many marked him, and one who had seen him told the king of him and wound up his eulogium with "the Lord is with him." That servant's knowledge of David, and the king's ignorance of David, for little did he suspect that the commended shepherd youth was to be his successor, "worked together" for David's advancement to be the royal harper. Thus the way began to open to the throne. By what varied and strange instrumentalities God's purposes are wrought out! We see it in this ancient story. And do we not see it to-day in the life of nations? Think of United Italy and how Mazzini's pen, and Cavour's brain, and Garibaldi's arm worked and successfully to the one difficult end of giving this beautiful, long-oppressed land a rightful place among the nations. Think of the enslaved multitudes of America, and of the many who, militant only for the "Union," involuntarily helped them into liberty. The doors of opportunity have swung upon little hinges. He whose eyes are quick to note Providence in his life will never lack a Providence to note. I. SAUL'S NEED OF DAVID. He needed some one. God, indeed, was his need! But that he forgot, as did his servants. They counselled a harper as the best physician for his melancholy madness. David's name was mentioned. At length he stood before the king. What was this malady? Is the phrase "evil spirit," "evil spirit from God" (for that came by Divine permission), only a strong Orientalism for melancholy? That is bad to bear, and, rooted in physical causes, many a good man has had to bear it. Dr. Johnson was one, and once under its terrible depression exclaimed, "I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits." But such an interpretation as this will not cover the large, sad statements in reference to Saul. Josephus says, "The Divine Power departed from Saul, and strange and demoniacal disorders came upon him, and brought upon him such suffocations as were ready to choke him." David "charmed his passion, and was the only physician against the trouble he had from the demons, whensoever it was that it came upon him, and this by reciting of hymns, and playing upon the harp, and bringing Saul to his right mind again. (Antiquities, b. vi. c. 8.) Whatever view is taken of Saul's malady the record is full of warning to us all. Well may we in the recollection of Saul "Stand in awe and sin not." II. THE POWER AND POWERLESSNESS OF MUSIC. David proved its power upon the evil-possessed Saul. Great the mystery of music. It sighs in the breeze, whispers in the stream, thunders in the sea, rolls in the mountain echoes, "thinner, clearer, farther going." It is hidden, too, in the very substance of things. From wood of most musical quality, the rarest, finest-sounding viols are made. Music waits to be tinkled out of steel, clashed out of brass, blown from horn, struck from tense string. Man plays upon the instrument and the instrument plays upon the man. In the words of Bushnell, "A man may plod, plot, speculate, and sneer, who has no fibred harp of music hid in his feeling; he may be a qualified atheist, usurer, demagogue, dogmatist, or hang-man; but he cannot be one that stirs men's blood Divinely, whether in song or in speech, and is very little like to be much of a Christian." History has much to tell us of this wondrous God's gift to man. The wisest ancient heathens told of the influence of music in their fable of Orpheus around whose lyre thronged trees and entranced rocks, and wild beasts charmed for awhile from their fury. One of our poets has imagined Cain, "an awful form," half brute, half human, listening to Jubal's harp, listening to the novel, anguish restraining harmony—

"Till remorse grew calm;
Till Cain forsook the solitary wild,
Led by the minstrel like a weaned child."

This, if no more than a poet's fancy, is at any rate his confession of the power of music. What nation has lacked its patriotic anthem? Songs like the Marsellaise have aided nations into freedom. Music is freedom's friend and languishes in bondage. God's gift is it to man. Cultivate home-music, then. Let it be of the best. Alas! that this God's gift should be desecrated. The noblest music is

religious. It comes to its crown of nobility as it is consecrated to the Highest. We see it in David. What larger legacy of blessing could he have left than he has in his psalms? They are never old. They are the possession, the voice of God, of each willing soul. And they are all of musical make: written to be sung: sung when first written by Hebrew choirs and choral multitudes in worship. Grateful for this Divine gift, let us holily use it. The devil fled from his flute, said Luther. Let us, with cheerful, holy music, keep at distance the evil ones of doubt, fear, care. Let the love of Christ be the marching song of our life. May His name be our life's sweetest music. And may the music of that name be the refreshment of our dying hour. (*G. T. Coster.*) *The worth and worthlessness of music*:—1. In this chapter we have Saul and David brought together; and round the combination of these two names a wonderful history gathers. Saul and David! How bright is the halo that surrounds one of those heads, and how dark is the cloud that settles on the brow of the other! how increasingly bright the one; how increasingly dark the other! And let me say that these two men represent two great but opposing principles. David represents the man of grace. A man he is with many faults, with many things which make him like other men at their worst; but a man who is, notwithstanding, worthy of the title, "a man according to God's own heart." A man subdued by grace, although with all his own individual points and characteristics; a man who could be Saul, a man who could be and might be Saul at his worst, but who, with all this, knows that he is bad, sincerely repents of his evil, and asks for grace that he may be better. And Saul is a man after, not God's own heart, but a man after his own heart. Saul, notwithstanding many points wherein he seems to be a David, is of a totally different spirit from David. How bright he was at the beginning! how frank, how modest, how generous, how ingenuous! David himself could scarcely have played the part better than Saul played it at the time when he was chosen to be king by Samuel, and suddenly exalted to that high dignity. And yet Saul, after all, was so centred in himself, so proud, so rebellious, so possessed of an evil spirit, that his day went down into deep and deepening darkness. 2. Notice further how the old Book does not hesitate to trace everything up to God. The writers of this Book, whenever they come across a dark, perplexing problem, are men of this stamp—they get themselves to rest, to mental rest and consistency, when otherwise all things would rock and reel, by pressing everything up to God and letting it lie there. To put the very devil into God's hands gives rest; I can wait now; he is on a chain. Why is evil here? And it is remarkable how the writers of the Bible, without making God responsible, put Him in there in the meantime. We rest here. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" You see how the problem breaks out upon us. "An evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul." What is this? What imp from hell crept up to the Bible and wrote that in it? "An evil spirit from the Lord." Well, but that rings all through the Bible! The Lord is put in, in the meantime, for us short-sighted mortals, and He seems to say, "Rest here; see as far along the difficulty as Me, and do not ask anything further." And although it seems hard for Me, and although it seems awkward for Me, I will bear the brunt; and in the end of the day I will be just and justified, and clear Myself when I am judged." 3. But now we will come at once, for we must hasten, to the real explanation of Saul's misery. It was this—secret sin; but I will give that sin a name: secret sin, taking the shape of self-will, which was not repented of and done away with. Self-will was the secret explanation of all Saul's inward and outward misery, of all the still heavier distress which overtook him later on. The Spirit of God has laid Saul bare to the very backbone, and we know what was his disease. When will we understand that the Lord is always trying to lay us bare to ourselves? There is a stone in the machine: may it soon be detected and put away, then all the wheels shall move swiftly and without friction, as they used to do. There is war in your own heart. I grant there are troubles without—external sources of trouble and annoyance—but how many of us here to-day can say that we are free from the battle that raged in Saul's breast—that worst of all fights: the fight between a man and his conscience; between a man and his God? Saul's lust was a lust for power, a lust for his own way. But he cloaked it, he covered it, he disguised it, he twisted it into religious phrases, he kept justifying himself to himself and to Samuel. But he is laid bare, and all subterfuges are torn to pieces. 4. Just a word about the too cheap and slim and utterly inadequate remedy that

was tried for Saul. The help and the helplessness, the worth and the worthlessness of music—the use and the uselessness of recreation, of change, of pleasure, of relaxation. How far these go; and how far they don't go! His servants came around Saul and virtually said, "What you need, dear master, is change; what you need is relaxation; what you need is music." No treasures, says the poet of my country—

"Nae treasures, nae pleasures can mak us happy lang,
The heart's aye, the pairt aye, that makes us richt or wrang."

And if God is not in the heart, then the evil spirit is in it. Music! Well, we will say nothing against music. Music hath charms of every kind; who has not felt its power? The man is not influenced and softened by music, we are almost inclined to say with Shakespeare, "Let no such man be trusted." We feel naturally suspicious of him. And yet how little it does! When we see what music sets itself to cure—London's music, London's sacred music, or its secular music—when we see what it is called in to cure, it is no wonder if I should get a little outspoken about it. Music for a madman!—whenever did it cure madness? Music for a man who needs Almighty God!—what a pitiful remedy! And is not that what the very Church of God is saying to-day? The masses—the squirming, wretched howling masses—fiddle to them, oh, fiddle to them; get up music for them, get up popular entertainments for them. Cast out the devil with the fiddle! You talk about curing earthquakes with pills, it is very much the same as curing poor Saul's trouble by getting a man who was skilful with his hands upon the harp. And a word, let me put in here, to people who are susceptible of music. This which was meant to do good to Saul, I rather think that in the end it only deepened his trouble; for medicine, when brought in in a case like this, if it does not permanently benefit, it will permanently injure. Said a young man to me, "When I go into a church where there is an organ, even before the sermon begins, and there is 'the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault;' when the music from the organ begins to peal and to steal, I almost begin to think I am a new creature." Well, if the organ is going to do it, it was an awful mistake for Christ to have climbed upon the cross. That was the blunder of all time—the Crucifixion was not needed if music and organs and choirs can cast out the evil spirit from a man. That is the trouble. Nothing will cure thy heart but the almighty grace from the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Word and the Truth of His Gospel. No; one of the sad things of this story is to find how near Saul came to a cure, and how far he remained from it. One could almost cry out, "Oh, Saul, you are on the right track, and yet you are altogether wrong! Oh, Saul, take not only the harp and the music, but if you would take the harper to your heart, that would cure you!" What was all Saul's trouble? It was David. David was the stone, the stumbling-stone, over which he tripped and fell. The story gets breathless in its sad interest: David brought so near; and if Saul had only lent his heart as well as his ears, and taken David in and loved him, David would have been his salvation. * My parable is easily applied. You do make a certain use of Christ; like Saul, you make a certain use of David and a certain use of religion, and you admit its power so far as you use it. Now, in the name of salvation, come farther. You like music, you like sacred music; I have seen it on your faces—how the eye gets filled over the singing, and for the time being, a brief but holy light settles upon your troubled face, and I believe that a corresponding peace comes into your war-broken soul. But if that is all, if it is only these sounds and strains and these sweet words, that is not enough. The devil in you can stand that, and still be what he is. If, however, you would take in not only the praise, but Him who is praised, if you would take in Christ, you would be saved. Poor man, Saul was allowing his wound to be slightly healed, to be slightly skimmed over, and soon it broke out with worse virulence than ever. The evil spirit departed from him when David took the harp and played with his hands; Saul was refreshed, but, as we know, only for a season. You are as near to the perfect cure as Saul was. See that you get it. And the perfect cure is to take the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the centre of the Church's service, and the centre of the preacher's preaching. Get past the singing, go past all our service, go past the preacher. I am but a harp, and a very poor harp, with little more than one string; but if the Spirit of God struck me, what wonderful tones He might

bring out. Go past the harp, go past the sound that comes from the harp, and see to it that you discern Him. See that you discern the heavenly David who holds this rude instrument in His hand. Yea, I say unto you, "See that you discern Him and love Him; take Him in to you; then shall the devil of discord leave thy breast, and thy soul shall begin to fill with heaven's own melody." (*John McNeill.*) *The influence of music*:—Out of so distant a past as this comes this famous illustration of the influence of music. The power with which music is credited to "soothe the savage breast" will only be disputed by those who maintain that the noises that soothe the savage breast do not deserve the name of music at all. But to this it is sufficient answer that for elementary life elementary forms of music are appropriate. Nay, we might descend lower still, and illustrate our subject by examples of the influence of music over the lower forms of animal life. Even a very dull and unmusical ear can detect the difference between the low, dulcet strain that soothes the spirit and assuages its tumult, and the sharp, ringing, martial air that sets the heart beating and the feet stirring. When it was said of John Knox that his voice stirred Scotland like the sound of a trumpet everyone realised the appropriateness of the simile. In the crises of great struggles men have been "played up" almost impossible ascents, when neither the ardour of the fight nor the chance of defeat would have stirred them sufficiently. The little child's sleep waits on the croon over its cradle; and the strong man's death in battle is made easy by the shrill call of the bugle or the pipes to blood and brain. Music can strike a chill to the heart with the wail of a dirge, or it can set the pulses dancing to the thrill of the march, or lift the soul irresistibly heavenward on swelling billows of chorus or magnificent. The passage that I have taken as a text has been expounded by Robert Browning in one of the greatest poems of the nineteenth century. It is in itself a moving incident, the great first king, drear and stark in his tent, and the bright, blithe young harpist seeking by music to win his soul back from the inferno of despair, where it was overwhelmed. But how? By what fashion of music can this miracle be accomplished? What craft can avail to bring back the dead to life? First, says Browning, he plays the tune of the sheepfold, the musical call to which they flock across the hills in the evening when the stars are coming out. Then he played strains which the creatures loved, the quails and the crickets, and the jerboa. And then the reaper's song of rejoicing, and then :

The last song,
When the dead man is praised on his journey.

And then he breaks into the glad marriage chant, and follows this with a battle march, and then again with :

The chorus intoned,
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.

This last effort, according to Browning, wrung a deep groan from the lips of the afflicted and desolate Saul. There was power in the music to break the chain of Saul's captivity. But now, in my judgment, Browning is absolutely right in representing that for the higher and deeper influence music alone, mere instrumental music, will not suffice. David realises this; he begins to sing to his harp; he makes the music the vehicle of great and inspiring thought; and he sings these uplifting and invigorating beliefs and hopes into the sorrow-stricken soul before him. The question now comes to be: how much of this result was the influence of music, and how much the influence of ideas? I would say, rather, there is a previous question. Would the bare ideas alone have had this wizard power over the soul apart from the music? The language of music is broadly understood by all peoples. The music of Beethoven is far more universally appreciated than the poetry of Milton, because of the disabilities inflicted on mankind by the tower of Babel. A Greek or an Italian cannot understand a line of Shakespeare, but Wagner's dramatic speech they comprehend. And, indeed, it may require a sensitive and discerning mind to appreciate Michael Angelo's expression in stone or on canvas of the woes of Italy, but it hardly needs education to realise how the tragedies of Poland fail through the music of Chopin. I. THE DANGER OF SELF-INDULGENCE. An absorbing enjoyment of music and devotion to music is one of the commonest forms of selfishness. This power of music to take

a masterful grip of the senses is so remarkable that it very commonly means the exclusion of all other objects and interests whatsoever. Even as the Pied Piper in Browning's legend played the children to their doom, and they followed him laughing and dancing, and careless of everything but the pleasure of the hour, so, as it seems to me, the influence of music may be full of a fatal fascination, in the presence of which all life's prosaic and commonplace duties go to the wall. There are tens of thousands of musical people, keenly sensitive to its almost incomparable joys, who ask only to be lapped

in soft Lydian airs
Married to immortal verse.

They seek life itself

In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out.

And the temptation of the Lotos eaters is their temptation, and the music of the Sirens draws them to their fate. It is in that nobler Orpheus song, of which it is recorded :

Nor sang he only of unfading bowers
Where men a tearless, painless age fulfil
In fields Elysian spending blissful hours
Remote from every ill.

But of pure gladness found in temperance high,
In duty owned, and revered with awe :
Of man's true freedom, which may only lie
In servitude to law.

And how 'twas given through virtue to aspire
To golden seats in ever-calm abodes ;
Of mortal men admitted to the quire
Of the immortal gods.

Even the Siren sisters, so the legend ran, ceased their music and listened wistfully to so high and noble and deathless a strain as this. II. **THE MUSICAL TEMPERAMENT.** There is another peril, due less perhaps to the music itself than to the musical temperament. Life cannot be all music. Nothing that you and I can ever do can entirely rule the discords out of it. And when the hour of music is over the reaction is apt to be extreme. The musical temperament is for this very reason subject more than most to nervous irritabilities. It is subject to wide extremes of sensation and emotion. One hour it is strung up to the keenest sensitiveness; but unstrung it is dull and flat beyond the common. And like all nervously-fashioned temperaments this tendency to sudden and violent reactions brings special moral perils in its train. The lives of great musicians are almost without exception melancholy reading. As the Scotch would say, they were "gey ill to live wi'." You have to be very charitable to their genius if they are to retain your respect. III. **HARMONY IN CHURCH CHOIRS.** And here you know, as one who has known so little of what many ministers have known so much, I might say a word on the thorny subject of church choirs. John Wesley, who never worshipped at Kensington Chapel, held strong opinions on this subject. But, honestly, I cannot say that I have come across what is ignorantly assumed to be the regulation trouble in churches, that these contribute least harmony who are humorously said to lead the harmony of the church. But if it were so I should not be surprised. Let those be censorious who know least about the constitution of the musical temperament. I want to say, as I close, that the truth of truths in regard to this subject is that the influence of music is a good servant but a bad master; that you need a higher master-influence over your lives than the influence of music. The famous lines of Milton are no exaggeration :

Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what Love did seek.

Iron tears down Pluto's cheek! There is power in music to soften the hardened spirit till it weep iron tears, till those who are familiar with evil catch a glimpse of love and innocence such as breaks down their self-complacency and stoicism. "And made Hell grant what love did seek." Yea, it was the music of the life of Jesus—love seeking a lost world from the grip of hell, that conquered the powers of evil, and delivered humanity from its dark captivity. It was this Divine Orpheus who sang such piercing and penetrating strains that the captives of Hell were enamoured once again of the life of faith and virtue. He made Hell grant what Love did seek. Think of that, if you will, as illustration of the influence of the higher melodies. (*C. Silvester Horne, M.A.*) *The remedial power of music*:—The healing power of music has been recognised in all ages; and the afflicted who have come under its charms have often been conscious of relief. "Theophrastus is mentioned by Pliny as recommending it for the hip gout; and there are references on record by old Cato and Varro to the same effect. Esculapius figures in Pindar as healing acute disorders with soothing songs." It is said that Luther, who was often haunted with the demons of melancholy, had frequent recourse to music. "He had," says Sir James Stephen, "ascertained and taught that the spirit of darkness abhors sweet sounds not less than light itself; for music, while it chases away the evil suggestions, effectually baffles the wiles of the tempter. His lute, and hand, and voice, accompanying his own solemn melodies, were therefore raised to repel 'the vehement aggressions of the enemy of mankind.'" Now, if true music has this power, we should observe:—I. THE KINDNESS OF THE CREATOR IN ENDOWING SOME MEN OF EVERY CIRCLE WITH MUSICAL GENIUS AND VOICE. That man's social circle must be very limited which does not contain some one whom nature has gifted with this remedial power. Schiller, in his dark hour of sorrow, calls to a little girl full of music, and says:—

"Come here, my girl, seat thee by me,
For there is a good spirit on thy lips.
Thy mother praised to me thy ready skill:
She says a voice of melody dwells in thee,
Which doth enchant the soul.
Now such a voice
Will drive away from me the evil demon
That beats his black wings close above my head."

II. THE OBLIGATION OF THOSE THUS ENDOWED TO CULTIVATE THEIR TALENTS FOR THE COMMON GOOD. III. THE MERCY OF GOD IN ORDAINING ITS USE IN PUBLIC WORSHIP. In the Temple of old music of the highest class was appointed by God, and placed under the direction of the most musical spirits and accomplished performers. IV. THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO HAVE THE CONDUCT OF WORSHIP TO PROMOTE THE BEST PSALMODY. Good psalmody must include good hymns as well as good melodies. (*Homilist.*) *Cunning in playing*:—I. THE MINSTREL. He had the poetic temperament, sensitive to nature, open to every impression from mountain and vale, from dawn and eve; and he had beside the power of translating his impressions into speech and song. A great modern poet imagines him reciting, as he sang to his harp, his call to his sheep, the song of the autumn vintage, the joyous marriage lay, the solemn funeral dirge, the chant of the Levites, as they performed their sacred duties, the marching music of the men of Bethlehem when they repelled some border foray. And we might add to these his marvellous power in depicting the sacred hush of dawn. The marvellous description of the thunderstorms that broke over Palestine, rolling peal after peal, from the great waters of the Mediterranean, over the cedars of Lebanon to the far-distant wilderness of Kadesh. The psalm began with David. Its lyric beauty and tender grace; its rhythmic measure; its exuberant hallelujahs and plaintive lamentations; its inimitable expression of the changeful play of light and shade over the soul; its blending of nature and godliness; its references to the life of men and the world, as regarded from the standpoint of God—these elements in the Psalter which have endeared it to holy souls in every age owe their origin to the poetic, heaven-touched soul of the sweet singer of Israel. What wonder that Saul's young man said that he was cunning in playing! II. THE YOUNG WARRIOR. There was abundant opportunity for the education of his prowess. The Philistines' frontier was not far away from his native town; and probably there were many repetitions of the incident of after years, when the sons of the alien held it, and placed a guard

demanding toll of the water of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate. But he would have been the last to attribute his exploits to his sinewy strength. By faith he had learnt to avail himself of the might of God. III. PRUDENT IN SPEECH. David was as prudent to advise and scheme as he was swift to execute. He had understanding of the times, of human hearts, of wise policy; and he knew just how and when to act. Frank to his friends, generous to his foes, constant in his attachments, calm in danger, patient in trouble, chivalrous and knightly, he had every element of a born leader of men, and was equally at home in the counsels of the state and the decisions of the battlefield. Whatever emergency threatened, he seemed to know just how to meet it. And this was no doubt due to the repose of his spirit in God. The sad mistakes he made may be traced to his yielding to the sway of impulse and passion, to his forgetfulness of his habit of drawing near unto God, and inquiring of Him before taking any important step. IV. THE CHARM OF HIS PRESENCE. He was David the beloved. Wherever he moved, he cast the spell of his personal magnetism. Saul yielded to it, and thawed; his servants of the royal household loved him; Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him; the soul of Jonathan was knit with his soul; the women of Israel forgot their loyalty to Saul, as they sounded the praises of the young hero. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *Theatrical estimate of life*:—Now listen to the poor hard-driven prayer: "Provide me now a man that can play well." Can we trace the genesis of that poverty-stricken cry? I think we can. Begin here. "He who drives out the prophet will come to whine for a fiddler." In the beginning, hard-pressed days with Saul found a messenger on the road speeding for Samuel. "Send for the prophet, bring the seer." But now he asks for no prophet. The counsellors he seeks are a feckless company, whose theatrical estimate of life can suggest to them no better medicine for a mind diseased than song and minstrelsy, and for a soul tragedy no better helper than "a cunning player." Surely better the prophet, though his truth be hard, than this despairing hunt for a minstrel. It all has point for us. There are some of the young men, to whom I specially address these words, who have felt how serious the problem of life is, to whom sin and its penalty are real, and goodness known as the only lasting and blessed thing. But the prophet taxed their thinking, troubled their conscience, cut too deep for comfort, pointed a way too hard, and they dropped him. They do not take the preacher seriously; they do not want the seer with fact-seeing eyes and fact-revealing speech; they have no longer mind for the prophet who speaks through the strong, great pages of literature. Instead of such company they like the set who say, "Find a cunning player;" and the round of pleasure, the worship of recreation and sport, the steeping of mind in the frippery literature of poor romance, is their way of saying, "Provide me now a man who can play well." But though the poor cry may assume with them a bravado's bounce, it is at root a whine, and the confession of a bitter need for more radical deliverance than anything that touches only the senses can give. You can track still further the cry. You cannot satisfy the soul by the tickling of a sense. The soul is satisfied only with God, and Saul has lost touch with God. The Maker of us has so fashioned us that our nature must go out of itself, and make its sanctuary in a greater and holier nature, before it can be rightly centred or rationally satisfied. "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I," is the expression of this in David's life. (Thomas Yates.)

CHAPTER XVII.

Vers. 1—27. **Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle.**—*The battle of Elah*:—While the Philistines were posted on the stony hills covered with brushwood which bounded the valley on the south, Saul and his army were posted on a similar stony ridge on its northern side. The valley, one of the most fertile in Palestine, was, at the scene of the conflict, about half a mile broad, with a torrent bed in the centre, which had been scooped out by the winter floods. This is apparently the *gai* or valley referred to in verse third. It is about ten feet deep, and twenty to thirty feet wide, and abounds in water-

rounded pebbles. Major Conder declares it to be impassable, except at certain places, thus explaining why the two armies faced one another for forty days without coming into actual conflict. Either party was afraid to cross the defile, thereby exposing itself to serious disadvantage; and so they confined themselves to warlike demonstrations. The abject terror of Saul and his mighty men excites within us little or no surprise; but it is otherwise with regard to the brave and lion-hearted Jonathan. To encounter Goliath in single combat, was not a more dangerous or formidable undertaking than that which he had once before successfully attempted at Michmash, when he and his armour-bearer boldly stormed the garrison of the Philistines, which was but the outpost of an immense army. Why did he not come to the front on this occasion? It might be said that his father would not allow him. And if Jonathan had offered himself as the champion of Israel there can be little doubt that Saul would have been most unwilling to accept him; but there is nothing in the narrative to suggest that Jonathan made such a proposal. The impression made by the narrative is that abject terror reigned throughout the entire army. Neither was it due to any decline in Jonathan's piety and faith. It is gratuitous to suppose that he had become contaminated and lowered in moral tone, by the unbelieving and disobedient spirit of his father. I am inclined to think, from the noble spirit subsequently displayed by Jonathan, that as an individual he was now fitter in every respect, physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually, for fighting the battles of the Lord, than he was when he wrought his great exploit at Michmash. He still believed, probably with a stronger faith than ever, that the Lord was able to save by many or by few; but he lacked the assurance, which he then had, viz., that the Lord was willing to save through him. Without that conviction he never would have attempted what he did at Michmash. It was only after God had fulfilled the proposed sign that Jonathan said to his armour-bearer: "Come up after me, for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel." But he had not that assurance now. The dark cloud of the Divine rejection, which had fallen upon his father at Gilgal, had encompassed him also, and darkened his spirit with its baleful shadow. It deprived him not only of the heirship to the kingdom, but also of the golden opportunity of fighting in the name of the Lord of hosts, with the proud giant of Gath. The period during which Goliath was permitted to defy the hosts of Israel was forty days. The frequency with which this period occurs in connection with special incidents in sacred history is remarkable and suggestive. It rained, e.g., forty days at the deluge (Gen. vii. 4, 12). Moses on two occasions was forty days with God on Mount Sinai (Ex. xxiv. 18; xxxiv. 28). The intercession of Moses on behalf of the people to avert from them the Divine wrath, on account of their sin in worshipping the golden calf, lasted forty days (Deut. ix. 25). The twelve spies were absent forty days during their inspection of the land of Canaan (Numb. xiii. 25); and because of the rebellion, caused by their evil report, the children of Israel were doomed to wander in the wilderness forty years, corresponding to the forty days spent in the work of inspection (Numb. xiv. 34). Elijah went, in the strength of the food which he received from the angel in the wilderness of Beersheba, forty days unto Horeb, the mount of God (1 Kings xix. 8). The period of respite which was assigned to Nineveh was forty days, as Jonah was commissioned to preach in its streets: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed" (Jon. iii. 4). The temptation of our Lord in the wilderness lasted forty days (Mark i. 13; Luke iv. 2). And the fact that Saul and his army were subjected to the challenge of Goliath for forty days, seems to show that there was a Divine purpose in permitting it to last so long. The forty days seem to suggest the thoroughness or completeness of the trial. The impotence of Saul and his army without God was thereby clearly and conclusively demonstrated. It was only after this humiliating demonstration that the Lord brought into the field His own champion. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." (T. Kirk.) *The Philistines*:—The Philistines, indeed, were the hereditary enemies of Israel. They represented brute force and insolent pride and heathen worship, as opposed to higher thoughts of duty and justice, and the presence and power of God with His people. The name "Philistine" has been used in modern times, accordingly, to represent stupidity and opposition to light and knowledge and advancement and "sweet reasonableness." (W. J. Knox Little, M.A.)

Ver. 7. **One bearing a shield went before him.**—*The shield-bearer of Goliath*:—I. THAT IT IS A GRIEVOUS MISTAKE FOR MEN TO ARM THEMSELVES AS IN

TRIPLE MAIL AGAINST GOOD INFLUENCES. Goliath had a "helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, &c. : and one bearing a shield went before him." How many in spiritual matters surround their minds as it were with a covering of obstinacy and indifference, so as to keep out from their understandings the knowledge of the truth, and case their hearts in an impregnable corselet of selfishness, so as to prevent the entrance of faith. In a different manner from this ought the humble believer, not inflated with ideas of his own righteousness, much less with any notion of bidding defiance to the armies of the living God, arm him for the battle of life. **II. THAT IT IS AS FUTILE AS IT IS SIN-FUL TO ATTEMPT TO OPPOSE THE WILL OF GOD.** The shield of the shield-bearer would not stop the stone sent from the sling of David. It is, assuredly, a presumption beyond description for the finite to imagine that he can understand, much less oppose, the Infinite. As well might the fly upon the wheel attempt to correct or to oppose the action of the machinery. If a counsel or a work be of God, "ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." **III. THAT WORLDLY FRIENDSHIP, BASED ON A COMPANIONSHIP IN SIN, IS WEAK IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL.** When Goliath comes forth to tread vaingloriously before the armies of Israel, we read that this man bearing a shield went before him. He had attended the gigantic champion in the hour of triumph, does he remain faithful to him in the hour of misfortune? Does he attempt to strike a blow on behalf of his fallen master? Does he strive to prevent David from dishonouring that master's body, by cutting off the giant's head with the giant's own sword? We read of nothing of the kind; no effort to aid or to protect his master is recorded of him. Doubtless he fled, as the other Philistines fled, when the great champion fell. So, the friendship of the world is not only enmity against God, but is not lasting or to be relied on. It is a mistake to state that there is honour amongst thieves; it is a delusion to think that there is loyalty to each other amongst sinners. The pursuit of unlawful pleasures is essentially a selfish pursuit; and the so-called friendships that are formed in it are evanescent and ephemeral. When such intimacies are found by any of the contracting parties to be no longer pleasant or profitable, the bond of self-interest that was their only connecting link is speedily broken, and the so-called friendship dissolved or ignored. Well is it, indeed, if it can be ended without bitterness and tears and blood. False friendship is like the gaudy but scentless sunflower, that will bloom only in the sunshine of prosperity. (*R. Young, M.A.*)

Ver. 11. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.—*The insulting attitude of worldliness towards religion*:—The insult was a symbol of the insulting attitude of worldliness towards religion. Brute force and power paraded themselves as contemptuous of the power of the Spirit. Religion cannot hold its own against the powers of the world except by spiritual forces and trust in God. When the guardians of religion, or those who should witness its inward power, fail in this trust, and in using the right weapons, then the world has its way. The symbol in this case is singularly vivid and complete. (*W. J. Knox Little, M.A.*)

Ver. 28. Eliab's anger was kindled against David.—*A series of victories*:—Hitherto David has had little suffering. Life is made up of trials: the Christian's course is never free from them: this we are to see here, for this seventeenth tells us, besides the contest with the lion and the bear, of three great trials which at this time befel the "man after God's own heart." I dare say that when you have read this chapter you have thought of David's wonderful faith and courage as seen in his conflict with the giant; and yet it tells us of three trials and three victories; and I believe that either of the other two was much more painful, and required more faith than was necessary to nerve him for the single combat. 1. Observe, then, in the first place, that after David was anointed he went back to his duties as before; for "Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep." For one moment he had been exalted, and then all went on as before. Then a brilliant career seemed opening before him: he was most unexpectedly sent for to the court. But as soon as the benefit was received it was forgotten; for ingratitude is the commonest of faults: David is not wanted now; the king's head is full of war matters; he stands in need of men, and not of boys; he wants swords and spears, not harps and music. Oh! never be carried away with the love of popularity; it is not worth striving after;

there is nothing that may be more quickly lost. Only let some unkind report be raised about you, or some great man sneer at you, and the people will be ready, to a man, to turn against you. And so David goes quietly back, resumes the shepherd's dress, takes the place of the youngest son, and feeds his father's sheep. I declare that seems to me to have been the greatest of the three trials; he must indeed have had strong faith, and he must have been endued with the grace of humility. And was it not so with our blessed Lord Himself? At the age of twelve years He is found "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them;" (Luke ii. 49, 51), and for eighteen years He remained in obscurity. Such was David's first trial here. Flattered one moment, and thrown aside the next; at one time likely to be famous in the court, and very shortly afterwards sent to feed the sheep near his father's homestead. Would it be very trying to be laid aside by illness, to sink into obscurity? 2. And now we come to a trial of a different kind, but equally painful, perhaps, or at all events one that shows the depth of his piety. We can quite understand how anxious Jesse was for the safety of his boys: his three eldest sons are gone to the battle; Eliab is there, the pride of his heart: so David is sent with a little present from home, and doubtless many kind messages, as Joseph was sent by Jacob to visit his brethren at Shechem. And when he comes, then his elder brother takes him to task, and utters the most cruel and vindictive insinuations. And here, too, Jesus can sympathise with His people. When He entered upon His public ministry, the first place at which He preached was His own city Nazareth. As He loved His mother, so He evidently had special affection for His own city, His neighbours, and near kindred: it was this love which made Him preach in the synagogue at Nazareth; but they would not receive Him; for "a prophet has no honour in his own country." There are some people who can bear a long trial, who may yet be thrown off their guard by a sudden temptation; and so perhaps it was quite as difficult to give Eliab back a gentle answer, as it was to go quietly home from the palace to the sheep-fold. Gentle natures are often sensitive, and sensitive people are almost always irritable. Oh! temper! temper! what a trial it is to those that are afflicted with it! and terrible is the guilt of those who provoke an irritable person. But David gained the victory, and must have made Eliab sensible of the wrong he had done him. This was a far greater victory, though little noticed, little thought of at the time, and not so much observed even now by those who read this chapter, as the contest with the giant shortly afterwards. 3. And now a word upon the third trial and the third victory. David fells the giant. There is no battle, but fight on the one hand, and eager pursuit on the other; in a few minutes the hills are completely deserted, and we can only hear the shouts of the pursuers gradually dying away in the direction of Ekron. There lies the headless body in the valley of Elah: come and let us stand by it, and learn one or two lessons. Behold in David the type of David's Son. When the great Captain of our salvation was tempted of the devil, He did not contend with him as God, but only as one of ourselves. He just took the "smooth stones out of the brook;" He met and defeated him as any Christian may, with the words of Scripture; as any Jew might then, with quotations from the Book of Deuteronomy. The Philistine, you see, but for David's faith, would have been stronger than the Israelites. The giant did not fall by sword and spear, but David's faith in God brought victory to his countrymen. It was because David was in the camp that Israel conquered. Would we be loyal Churchmen, would we do good service to our Church, let us be men of God; let us so behave, that the Lord Jesus shall still be in the midst of us; let us make use of the stones from the brook, of prayer, and Holy Scripture; and the Lord will yet save us from ruin, though He may see fit to humiliate us. How did David know that he was equal to this emergency? What made him sure that he should conquer the giant? He had had experience of God's help before. So indeed had the Israelites; they had gained a great victory under Samuel, and had reared their "Ebenezer;" but this was forgotten now, and therefore their faith failed them. But not so David. And then David knew nothing about the use of armour, though no doubt Saul provided him with the best; but he was expert in the use of the sling. Ah! those "stones from the brook," how are they despised! Any other means of grace is more valued than Scripture. No doubt David was regarded as a hero from Dan to Beersheba; the slaughter of the giant made him famous, and his praise was in every one's mouth. Yet I think I have

shown you that the killing of the giant was a very little matter; that what is really to be admired is David's faith; and that either of the other two trials was in reality more severe. (*C. Bosanquet, M.A.*) *Unsympathetic relatives*:—In early life Edmund Burke was not happy at home, as no one there sympathised with his dreams and aspirations. "It is, after all, a man's own relations who generally look with the least confidence on his long wrestle with adversity, and are most astonished when the tide turns and a great victory succeeds to what had seemed to them mere hopeless toil." *The two victories in one day*:—If there had been a conspiracy to frustrate the Divine purpose in relation to David, his relatives could scarcely have kept him out of sight more persistently, or brought him forward more sluggishly and reluctantly. Men were slow to see the seeds of future greatness and godliness which the Lord beheld, and they looked not for succour in the direction whence He had ordained it to come. Praise belongs to Him for carrying out His own purpose despite the want of discernment and sympathy on the part of His people. If His thoughts had not prevailed over men's thoughts, the Jewish nation would have lost one of its greatest kings, and the Bible one of its most instructive histories. The Divine wisdom in the choice of David was soon proved when the time of trial came, and he had an opportunity of showing the regal spirit the grace of God had given to him. The second triumph is by far the more famous, but we must not suffer its splendour to hide from us the true glory of the first. The man who kills a giant will always be more talked of than the man who, against the force of strong temptations, controls his own temper; but it is none the less true that—"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." **I. DAVID'S VICTORY OVER HIMSELF.** It is not difficult to conjecture the cause of Eliab's ill-will and unjust upbraidings. He had not forgiven David for the distinction that God had granted, and the cruel spirit of envy had turned him from a brother into a foe. This fiendish passion of envy, so common in human nature, can not only destroy the joy of a brother in a brother's welfare, but would also, if it could get into a mother's heart, be hellish enough to make her miserable at the thought of the prosperity of her own first-born boy. What a foul thing that must be which finds the elements of its own perdition in a sight of the paradise God gives to others, and which would be wretched and woebegone in heaven itself if it met with any one having stronger wings or a higher place than its own! When, in the last judgment, Envy is placed at the bar of God, what an indictment will be laid against the Evil Spirit! The insulting anger of Eliab—the cruelty of Joseph's brethren—the murderous wrath of Cain—and the greatest share in the greatest crime in the world, the crucifying of the Lord of glory—will be charged upon him. The taunts and insinuations of Eliab must have cut David to the quick. If the undeserved rebuke had been administered in private, it would have been hard to bear; but Eliab was base enough to be a public slanderer, and sought, by his foul aspersions, to do irreparable damage to David's reputation amongst those who saw him that day for the first time, and would be too ready to think that there must be good grounds for these charges of pride and arrogance, seeing they were made by the young man's own brother. The temptation must have been strong to answer it with words of burning indignation, and only a man of much meekness and of great self-control could have replied to it as David did. Who likes to be accused of vile motives which he knows have no place in his heart, and to hear his very virtues denounced as being nothing but hideous vices which he tries to conceal by means of pious airs and canting pretensions? It was a cross of this kind David had to carry, and he bore it as if there had been given to him some prophetic foresight of the perfect example of Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, and who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. The restraint which David put upon his temper under this great provocation was the most godly thing he could have done, and therefore it was the wisest and most profitable. Having regard to the great work before him, it was very important that David should keep his temper. Could the second victory have been achieved if he had failed in the first conflict? That which was right amidst the temptations of one hour was the best preparation for the arduous labours of the next hour. All other things being equal, he who is most triumphant over temptation and most faithful to duty to-day will be the strongest for work and warfare to-morrow. **II. DAVID'S VICTORY OVER GOLIATH.** History records many instances in which cruelty, and tyranny, and persecution have thoroughly outwitted themselves and frustrated their own purposes. Charity must not rejoice in iniquity, but it may

exult in the defeat of iniquity, and especially when iniquity plays the part of a scorpion and stings itself, and when, like Haman, it unwittingly prepares a gallows for its own execution. The defeat of the Philistines in the downfall of their great champion is a most striking illustration of this kind of self-destruction. "Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears" (1 Sam. xiii. 19). This cruel policy was so successful that on one occasion there were only two swords or spears possessed by the entire Jewish army. Saul and Jonathan had them; but all the rest of the people had to use such cumbersome and clumsy weapons as unskilled hands could make without fire or hammer. Necessity has always been the mother of invention, and we may be certain that, when iron weapons were denied to the Hebrews, their skill was largely developed in other directions. The youth of the land could not practise sword-exercise, or learn to poise the spear, and therefore they would be driven to make themselves master of other methods of defence and assault. Before this period the Benjamites had become famous for their skill in slinging, for "Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss" (Judges xx. 16). When all edged weapons were taken from them, the people would be sure to turn again to those in whose use their fathers had been so renowned, and practice would again make perfect. Thus the issue proved that the Philistines laid the foundation of their own defeat when they took all swords and spears from the Israelites, and compelled them to try other means of accomplishing their deliverance. The foes of God's people meant it for evil, but God overruled it for good. David's skill with the sling would have failed to gain the victory if it had been divorced from faith in God. It was his trust in the Lord which gave such calmness to his soul, as surely as it was the calmness of his soul which helped to make his arm so steady and his aim so sure. His faith, however, was not a fanatical faith, which violates reason and neglects the most appropriate means. When he refused to wear Saul's armour, he proved his common sense as much as he displays his confidence in God. The faith of David was also associated with experience as well as with reason. He remembered past mercies, and thereby encouraged his heart to rest in Him who is ever the same. The most effectual way of chasing away despair and regaining confidence is to adopt the Psalmist's resolve—"I will remember the works of the Lord: Surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings." (*C. Vince.*) *Preparations for conflict*:—How much like a chapter of accidents this looks! Superficially narrated, we should say "It happened." There are no accidents with God, and none with those who commit their way unto Him. We shall see all these things were preparations for conflict. I. *JESSE'S ANXIETY CONCERNING HIS SOLDIER SONS*. We meet David once more on the road from Bethlehem. Not on his way to the palace of the king, for yet is he the drudge of the family, and is sent laden with presents to the chief of the division in which his brothers serve (vers. 17, 18), to see how they fare. How akin to Joseph, who also was sent by his father to his brethren, and met with no kindly reception! While talking with one and another the boastful challenge of the giant Goliath arrests his attention. Once no such challenge would have come to Saul unanswered, but all valour flees when the Spirit of the Lord leaves a man. David avows his readiness to meet him. Was it a chance that David was sent—that he was sent that morning—that his brethren were to the front when he arrived at camp, or a list of curious combinations? II. *THE DISCOURAGEMENT WITH WHICH DAVID MEETS*. David is jealous for the Lord of Hosts. He was instantly discouraged, first by:—1. His own brethren (Matt. x. 36, with ver. 28). That fine soldierly-looking brother who captivated Samuel's judgment is terribly at fault. Listen! he twits his brother with neglect of duty (ver. 28). True he does not know; he is only supposing the sheep must have been left uncared for, as David is there. To an angry, jealous nature, truth is of little matter. The probable, or even the possible, is quite near enough. 2. The king discourages him (ver. 33). Doubtless appearances were against David. They have often been against brave men, and Saul was only the echo of that prudence which is popular to-day. God's men, who endure as seeing Him who is invisible, cannot be measured by the rule of this world's wisdom. We advance now to another link. 3. Thirdly, in all this David was being fitted for the conflict as the result of the Divine anointing. Discipline is often inward through the outward, and sometimes the outward is proof of the inward. David's offers of service were refused. That the offers of

service are often refused is apparent in the records of the Holy Scriptures. Dr. Ker unfolds this in a sermon from the refusal of the Israelites' offers of service by Joshua. He draws attention to Gideon's band, that not all were chosen who offered; and to Christ's searching answer to the man who would "first go bury his dead." To-day, as of old, many offers of service are refused—and why? Thus, our sincerity is tested. Only so do we know ourselves; but every "Christian" comes out of the Slough of Despond "on the far side." One result of these discouragements in David's case was, he was thrown on God's promise. His past opens (ver. 34). His own mind is finding wonderful illumination as he tells the king of what he had done. This is the right use of past experience. "I slew him;" surely the God of my strength can give me power over this Philistine lion also. Do you not observe his sense of Goliath's sin increases in proportion as his faith in God expands? There is a rising emphasis of scorn surely. "This uncircumcised Philistine;" "This Philistine." How terrible is this contempt, coming from God's chosen! Thus early we mark the habit of referring everything to the will and providence of God, which is the key to David's character. Thus there is outward victory. David has gained permission—has won his way; and is not this the window through which we see the inward victory? All through he maintains his humility, yet who could imagine any test more trying than this double refusal of service? And how conspicuous this humility is in his answer to Saul after the victory (ver. 58), and that untrue and supercilious speech of Abner's (ver. 55). He maintains his patience. What restraint he must have put upon that impetuous spirit of his to take the sneer so quietly! (ver. 29). "He that bath rule over his own spirit is better than the mighty." (*H. E. Stone*.) *David and Goliath*:—This is a revolution wrought by one brave soul. And this is but a single incident in the life of one who walked by faith, and who learned his faith in communion with God. It was this which gave to David the qualities which this history reveals—a sound judgment, a fearless tongue, a sweet temper, and a lion's heart. I. A SOUND JUDGMENT. David came to Elah a youth amidst an army of veterans. Yet his judgment was sounder than Saul's, than Abner's, or that of any of the bronzed warriors around him. Why? Because he came to Elah from Bethlehem, from the quiet hills where he had communed with God, and strengthened his faith in Him. The men of Israel had natural courage enough, but this was a combat which, on all natural principles, seemed hopeless. David, however, looked at the matter through eyes that were "full of religious light." David saw God upon the scene. He was the only one who saw Him; and that sight made the shepherd the true tactician. Faith in God gave him at once the true point of view. Mere secular computations had half blinded Israel's eyes. The impressions and the services of the young are sometimes better than those of the old, because the elder may have lost simplicity of faith and have learned to look at life from a worldly point of view. Inexpert in the details of a matter, still the prayerful woman, the believing youth, may have a higher, clearer view of some Divine principle, some promise of Jehovah, which should be His people's guide. So the mother of Mills, a quarter of a century before the leaders of the Church had moved, declared that missions to the heathen world ought to be begun, and dedicated her own son in his infancy to the work. So Mills himself and his young associates, praying by the haystack in the fields of Williamstown, saw what Israel ought to do, saw that was possible which others called chimerical, and planned a bold campaign for Christ while yet the eyes of the fathers were sealed. They were mere striplings who offered themselves first to meet the giant forces of the pagan world. Wisdom dwells not in the noisy camp with the timid multitudes, but on the solitary hills of prayer.

II. AN INDEPENDENT TONGUE. "Swift to hear, slow to speak," is a good rule for youth, but not when it is clearly seen that others have forgotten God's commandments, or have fallen to questioning his promises. Be modest, but be not so cautious a Christian that you shall cease to be a Christian. Whatever you have clearly seen in your study of God's work, be not afraid to speak it out nor to let it be known that you differ from others. You have good examples for it. "His word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20. 9).

III. AND THE FRANKNESS OF DAVID'S TEMPER WAS EQUALLED BY ITS SWEETNESS. It was not easy in the presence of all the soldiers to listen quietly to a brother's taunts and sneers, to be accosted as an idle runaway, to be contemptuously ordered back by that surly Eliab, jaundiced and spiteful with his jealousy. What an admirable

self-control does David show! Have a soft answer for your detractors, and even stay with them if you may, like David, to fight their battles and cover their disgrace. IV. It hardly need be said THAT HIS COURAGE WAS SIMPLY CONFIDENCE IN GOD. And it was a reasonable confidence. He did not fail to measure the strength of his giant enemy, but he heard him defy the living God, and when he heard that, he knew his enemy was doomed. He knew that Jehovah would "make bare his holy arm," and "make all the earth to know that there is a God in Israel." Woe unto him that striveth against his Maker! The most powerful of men, the most gigantic combination which diplomacy or society or capital can frame, are doomed when they set themselves against God's holy law. David had not only heard the word of Jehovah's promise; he had had experience of His faithfulness. This was not the first danger he had met with quick, uplifted prayer. And David's confidence in God was reasonable from another point of view. The hazards he was taking were not encountered needlessly, from a mere exuberance of daring or delight in danger. He might well ask, "Is there not a cause?" The interest of Israel, the honour of Jehovah, were at stake: it was reasonable, therefore, to believe that he would not be left to fight alone. Still less did he seek this public championship of Israel, or welcome it to win for himself a name. But David's confidence in God was attended by no carelessness. Because "the battle was the Lord's," David did not think there was little for him to do. What do we see? He carefully selects the most appropriate means, and then he plies them with intense energy. (*Arthur Mitchell, D.D.*) *The conflict between good and evil*:—We may look at David and Goliath as they appear in contest, as illustrating the forms, spirits, weapons, and destiny of the great moral antagonists of our world—good and evil. 1. These two men give us a picture of the forms of good and evil. Evil in our world is like Goliath—of gigantic stature, immense energy, and imposing aspect. It is a colossus. Good in our world is like David in its appearance—small, weak, and insignificant; possessing nothing to which the world attaches the idea of strength or glory. So it appeared in Christ. "He was a root out of a dry ground." 2. These two men give us a picture of the spirit of good and evil. The spirit of evil, like that of Goliath, is proud, contemptuous, malignant. The spirit of good, like that of David, is that of humble trust and dependence upon God. 3. These two men give us a picture of the weapons of good and evil. Evil, like Goliath, has many and powerful weapons to fight its battles. Like Goliath, it is full-armed. Armies and navies are on its side. The weapons of good are of the simplest kind; the sling and stone of David would symbolise them. "The weapons of our warfare," etc. 4. These two men give us a picture of the ultimate destinies of good and evil. Goliath, notwithstanding his great strength, proud vanities and mighty weapons, was slain, and his body given to the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the earth. So it will be with evil. Like the image in the monarch's vision, the little stone of truth shall shiver it into atoms. The end of truth will be like that of David—triumphant and progressive in honour and influence in the empire of God. (*D. Thomas.*)

Ver. 29. **Is there not a cause.**—*The giant sin of England*:—Surely there was a cause. David's was not intemperate zeal, nor his anger causeless or unprovoked. It was time even for the holy shepherd to play the warrior, when God was thus openly dishonoured and His cause despised. What is the state of this Christian land now? Is there not a sin, an ancient enemy of God's church, a bold and bitter opposer of His Gospel, which has poured in upon our land like a flood, and dares us to the teeth, and almost courts opposition? Is there not a giant champion of the devil's host, that stalks forth before its fellows, and seems to challenge the soldiers of the cross and defy God's Christian Israel? Has not drunkenness invaded this our land, spread itself throughout the length and breadth of it, and "set up its banners for tokens?" "Is there not then a cause" why professing Christians should bestir themselves to save and purify their land from this foul and destroying army? I. **THE SPREAD OF DRUNKENNESS.** This fearful sin is widely spread through our land. II. **LET US CONSIDER ITS EFFECTS.** 1. What are its effects upon the soul? It is a dark cloud about the soul, that hides God from it—that shuts out the light of His Holy Spirit, that would shine into the darkness. It hardens the heart, that it cannot feel. It sears the conscience as with a hot iron (*Hosea iv. 11*). Even natural kindness is extinguished. 2. Now mark its effects upon the mind. 3. Now mark its

effects upon the body. 4. Mark next its effects on the estate. III. AND WHAT CAN BE DONE. The gospel of the grace of God can change it, and that alone. (W. W. Champneys, M.A.)

Ver. 32. **Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.**—*Spiritual heroism*:—I. SPIRITUAL HEROISM IS SOMETIMES UNEXPECTEDLY DEVELOPED. Little dreamt David, when he left his home at Bethlehem that morning, for the simple purpose of visiting his brethren in the camp, what wonders his single arm would achieve. His heroism was the development almost of a moment. Before he well knew to what he had committed himself, he found himself pledged to a deadly conflict with Goliath. And thus unexpectedly is spiritual heroism sometimes developed. I say developed, not created. The quality must exist before it can be brought out; but this bringing out is often unexpected. A youth has grown up in the privacy of some country home—quietly, and without attracting any special notice. None have marked him out for “a burning and a shining light.” So has youth passed away, in steady pursuit of personal piety, in unpretending labours, in earnest endeavour to be faithful in the little; and manhood has dawned, when, unexpectedly, as to Gideon threshing wheat by the wine-press, as to Elisha following the plough, there comes a call to prepare for some great undertaking. Instances will readily occur, illustrative of these observations, and confirmatory of their truth. You will recall names, such as those of Luther, and Hooker, and Baxter, and Carey, and Livingstone, which, though now emblazoned in the church’s annals, are names of men whose opening life afforded, even to those who knew them best, but few indications of after distinction and usefulness. II. SPIRITUAL HEROISM NOT UNFREQUENTLY MEETS WITH DISCOURAGEMENT FROM THOSE WHO SHOULD BE THE FOREMOST TO SUSTAIN IT. What noble plans, and comprehensive enterprises, have been nipped in the bud by the unkindness, and suspicion, and jealousy of Christians! What shackles and fetters have been thrown round the free limbs of many a man, anxious to do great things for God, and to leave the world better than he found it; and this by brethren too—elder brethren—Eliahs! III. SPIRITUAL HEROISM UNSUBDUED BY DISCOURAGEMENT DOES, IN DUE TIME, FIND OPPORTUNITY FOR ITS EXERCISE AND DISPLAY. Though David obtained little sympathy from his brethren, if indeed any, he had but to bide his time, and God would open up his way. He quietly waited for providential intimations, and they did not tarry. Without seeking to obtrude himself upon public notice, or to run before he was sent, he was soon sought out. There is often more real bravery in waiting than in action; more fortitude in occupying the lonely watch-tower on the hill-top, than the moment for onward march may be known as soon as indicated, than there is in facing the foe when the rage of battle is aroused. It is no mark of Christian soldiery to be impatient of the Lord’s will, and to want to be moving when He has commanded us to be still. IV. SPIRITUAL HEROISM IS DISTINGUISHED BY A LOFTY AND FIRM RELIANCE UPON GOD. V. SPIRITUAL HEROISM, THOUGH ARDENT AND IMPULSIVE IN ITS NATURE, IS NOT LESS WISE IN THE MODE OF ITS WARFARE. There was a simple weapon he had learned to use with skill. Mailed warriors might smile when they saw it, and augur that the conflict about to ensue would be only child’s play; but the sling and stone in David’s hand had done their work erewhile, and he could trust them now. At least, failure with these was only possible, with the other certain; and if he did succeed with such simple means of attack, how much greater glory would redound to God, and in its degree be reflected on him! So with his sling and stone he advanced to meet the vaunting giant of Philistia. Now, there is nothing, respecting which Christians need to be more earnestly counselled than the cultivation of the spirit of wisdom in their endeavours to be good. Zeal is not enough; boldness is not enough; utterance is not enough; all these may exist in the highest degree, and yet, unless there be combined with them tact, sagacity, address, the amount of possible good which the individual believer may accomplish will be greatly curtailed. VI. SPIRITUAL HEROISM IS GENERALLY HONOURED OF GOD IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ITS AIMS. David slew the giant, and every courageous and heroic Christian slays his giants. (C. M. Merry.) *David and Goliath*:—I don’t know whether I am correctly interpreting the picture, but I suspect that everybody in the camp said that somebody else ought to go out and kill this giant. I suppose you must have noticed how all the disagreeable duties of life are somebody else’s business. There was the married man—well, of course, he didn’t go because he had a wife and children who were dependent upon him. There was the old man

in the camp who would have gone if he had been a younger man, and there was the young man who would have gone if only he had had the experience of the older men. I don't suppose there were many people there who had not dreamed of doing it. I can quite believe that in imagination again and again they had dodged that awful club of Goliath and driven their spear home to his heart. It is astonishing how brave men are in their dreams; how extraordinarily the world would get on if only it were governed by our imaginations rather than by our doings. There they were, some of them no doubt explaining to the others how easily the thing could be done, how they would do it themselves if only they had the time. An ancient picture? No—a picture of to-day. It doesn't matter what you call your giant. It may be the giant slavery; it may be the giant cruelty, or it may be the great twin giant of your day and of mine—the giant drink and the giant lust. There they are, and how many in the Christian churches imitating the Israelites in the camp? How many of the young men doing it, dreaming of giving their lives to great crusades? God's Kingdom is not going to be helped by your dreams, or by talking of how you would do it if you were somebody else, or had some lesser duties and responsibilities. Better to fight and fail; better to lose life and limb and all things than suffer this daily dishonour, this endless humiliation, and advertisement to all the world that there is not a single soul of faith with enough pluck left to challenge this unequal encounter. What do you think the world thinks when it sees the Church in the position of the camp of Israel? When David talks about the armies of the living God it sounds like irony. Ah! yes, and it sounds like irony to-day, when you refer to the people in the Churches as being the army of the living God, and then think how thousands upon thousands of us are hiding our diminished heads simply because we are in the presence of these gigantic evils and wrongs of the modern world, waiting for God to send somebody else to do something. "Somebody ought to do something!" Yes, and we are in the happy position here of knowing who ought to do it. Where was King Saul all the time? Why, it was for this very thing he had been anointed, if he knew it. What is the use of your elect man? The Churches are always talking about the doctrine of election—well, here is his chance, God's elect man. Where is King Saul? Let the biggest man in the host of Israel fight the biggest man in the host of Philistia. Oh! you have seen men like it, and not individuals alone, but battalions like it, men who if you counted heads, Churches who if you counted heads, would make a brave show, God knows; but if you begin to weigh souls it is a very different business. You could not weigh Saul's soul: there was nothing to weigh. Why, if you have got to bribe men into being heroes, and if you have got to buy courage in the open market, it is a poor thing for the King and for the kingdom. But there was another man in the camp who ought to have been doing this work. Samuel very nearly anointed Eliab to be King over Israel simply on account of Eliab's presence, his athletic form, his powerful frame. He seemed just the sort of man for King, and ever since I have no doubt whatever he had been saying to himself, "What the land has missed in not having me for King!" Well, now is his chance; everything comes to him who knows how to wait. If he lives to be as old as Methuselah he will never have such a chance again. He had it, and he missed it. He preferred to sit at a safe distance from the Philistine and sing, "Let me like a hero fall," or whatever happened to correspond to that flamboyant melody in the history of his own time. He had his chance; he missed it; but I think we ought to do him the justice of saying that if he failed as a hero, he was a tremendous success as a cynical critic. I sometimes think that criticism is the greatest natural gift that we possess, and I have yet to find the man who hides that talent in the earth. Eliab was a critic to the manner born. He could not do deeds, but he always criticised the men who did. Oh, how easy it is in this world to sneer. I wonder if you have ever done it; if you have ever sneered at enthusiasm, if you have ever sneered at simplicity, if you ever sneered at whole-souled faith in God. God pity you if you have. If David had failed I would rather be David the enthusiast than Eliab the critic. And David had not come there to bandy arguments with Eliab or with any of his compatriots, for his young soul was all aflame. Love of his country, love of his faith, love of his God met in the young man's soul, and he passed through the camp with a sweet serene look upon his face, and at last they took him earnestly, seriously, and they led him to Saul and set them face to face—the real King in the young man with the soul of flame,

and the false King, dismayed and sore afraid. "Let no man's heart fail him, I will go." Oh, Saul, Saul, hadst thou no shame in thy heart to let this stripling go instead of thee? "Go and the Lord be with thee"—seeing in this young man one with whom the Lord would verily be, but knowing that the Lord would never be with him again. And you know one of the saddest things in my ministry is occasionally to come across fathers and mothers who are quite willing to give their children to the Christian Church and to the service of Jesus Christ, and who say to the lad or to the lassie, "Go, and the Lord be with thee"—but there is always a sort of catch in the voice, because they know they cannot go, they will never go; know they have grown old and hard in sin, and they have sinned their God out of their life. Oh, if there are any here who are practically saying to their young men and their maidens, "Go where I ought to go but can't; go on the holy service on which I ought to go but can't; go, and the Lord be with thee," I want to turn to them and say, you are giving up too soon. God has His place for you, and the mystic presence may come back to you again, thank God, if only you, like these younger ones, will place yourself at His disposal and surrender yourself in faith to do His will. But, see, Saul has nothing to give to this young man of faith, he has nothing to give him of courage, and all that he can think to give him at the moment is the harness that he used to wear. It is no use to Saul now. What use is a helmet, or a sword, or a spear, if there is not a soul behind them? None! He cannot wield that sword in God's war. But David has not proved them. He is going to retain all the simplicities of his youth, all the simple arts and crafts of which he has the skill, and he is going out to serve God with the weapons that he knows how to use. Everything now depends on one fact, that David believes in God. "The Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Oh! I tell you we have not yet exhausted or begun to exhaust the power that there is for the man who simply makes that a real faith, and not a mere written creed! But there is more in this subject of Saul's armour than appears upon the surface, and I want to say a word or two to those who are older. There are some people who are so anxious, as it seems to me, to clothe their young people with ideas that are too old for them—to send them forth with religious experiences that are not their own. I want to plead with you—leave us the simplicities of our faith, for those are the things that tell and count. Leave them the sincerities and realities of their faith, will you? Leave them their slings and their stones for a little while; they will do much more with them than with all the armoury that you may give them out of the sixteenth or out of the seventeenth centuries. There are some parents that have been known to me who, in the presence of the great modern giant of doubt, have most earnestly desired to clothe their children with the old-fashioned weapons, and give them, I won't say Paul's armour, but Saul's armour, and let them talk somebody else's second-hand theology. We do not want old heads on young shoulders. We want the young Christian who has got his own experience of God. I know perfectly well, of course, that they talk things which you grave philosophers in the pews cannot agree with. But it doesn't matter. They hit the mark with the stone from their sling. Oh! don't you know the world to-day is simply dying for lack of reality—the man who will dare to be real, dare to be absolutely sincere and simple in his Christian faith. You remember that incident in Carlyle's history of Frederick the Great where, when Frederick is growing to be a young man, a very learned university professor is got to instruct him in the theological creed that he ought to hold. The professor dosed the budding Nero with creeds and catechism until at last the poor young fellow's mind was so confused that he knew practically nothing, whereupon Carlyle says this to the professor, "Teach the young man either nothing at all, or else something that he will know to be beyond a doubt when he comes to think of it." Now, it is the things that are beyond a doubt that you cannot prove perhaps in your logical fashion, but they are established beyond a doubt, that we want our young people especially to hold by. I don't mind how simple your faith in Jesus is, but I want it sincere, real, earnest, and when you go out to do battle that will be the stone from your sling which will bring your antagonist to the dust. I have stopped at the most exciting moment, the critical moment when David is advancing on the Philistine with a slave and a shepherd's bag, and five smooth stones. And oh! how the giant girded at him, nay, he cursed him by his gods. If, when you get home to-night, you will read the Book of Judges, you will find there this fact stated, that there were seven hundred men of the tribe of

Benjamin who could sling a stone left-handed to a hair's breadth. It was not for nothing that David belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, and he was there to prove that there was one man of the tribe who had not forgotten the ancient tribal craft. At anyrate, he ran to meet him. There was the whirl of a shepherd's sling, the low, hurtling note of the moving stone; neither his eye nor his hand had failed him. Where are now thy boasts, oh Philistine, and where are now thy fears, oh Israel! So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone. "And," say some of you here to-night, "and that was the end." Oh, no, no; that was the beginning. Listen. "Then the men of Israel and Judah rose up and shouted and pursued the Philistine." I seem to have heard that shout all the world over. All the people who ought to have done the thing and didn't, all begin to shout at once and to pursue the Philistine. Eliab found that his pressing business engagements would keep. Saul began to betray his spirit and betray a furious eagerness for the fray. The elder men said that perhaps after all they were young enough; the younger men said they would risk their lack of experience; the married men said well, perhaps their wives and children would be kept, and everybody who had been playing the coward was now resolved to play the man. You remember that it was the habit of Falstaff always to lie down on the battlefield when the battle was on, and when it was over he would carry back to the camp a body who had been slain, and boast his prowess. There are lots of Falstaffs in the world, people who are always fighting the causes that have been won already by somebody else. There are triumphant supporters to-day of causes in England which nobody challenges, which are as secure as secure can be, but they have no heart for any fight that is not already won. Ah, yes, I know very well that it lends itself to a little gentle irony, but I am here to-night to plead for men of soul, and men of faith. I do not believe much in the pluck of any man who has not got David's faith. That is the secret, and it is to you young men especially that I am appealing. Here we are, you and I, in this London, and you know that God wants men. There is a Son of David, who I think is in this building to-night, nay, I know he is, and he is saying to you all, "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. The giant sin lies stricken. Come up, come up against him, for you are well able to overcome." What are you going to do—still stay, craven, panic-stricken, in the safety of the camp, or are you coming out to the holy war? (*Silvester Horne, M.A.*) *David and Goliath*:—David had been living in communion with God—David had been storing up spiritual strength and imbibing spiritual principle from God, which he was now to exhibit under circumstances which appalled the heart of other men. And thus it is when God has need of His servants, and when circumstances require their help; then they do show that they have principles which are able to honour Him, while other men fall back, and then do they show which is the man that really does most good in his generation; then is it seen whether Eliab and men of his stamp are able so effectually to serve their generation as David, who comes forth in the power of God to do deeds at which other men tremble. And we see another lesson. When these two respective candidates—the man armed with the power of God and the man standing merely in his own strength and wisdom, are brought into circumstances of perplexity and danger, then it is seen which has real courage, the man that can rely calmly upon God or the man that stands only in his own strength. I. First of all, **THE MISTAKES AND WEAKNESSES OF THE WORLD IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF DIFFICULTY.** Whence was it that Israel's fear arose? They "judged after the sight of their eyes"—they looked only on the outward appearance—they made just the mistake that Jesse did. The reason why Israel feared was, that they looked upon the outward appearance; they were guilty of the same want of faith that the ten spies were who were sent up to spy out the promised land. They saw the Anakims great and tall; and what did they do? They measured the Anakims by themselves, and they said, "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers;" and they were afraid. So it was with Israel: they saw the power, as they conceived it, of the Philistine's host; they saw the number of the men arrayed against them; they saw Goliath of Gath, and their hearts failed. We see that in this case Israel looked only at their own human resources; they measured their own power, by comparing it with the overwhelming power apparently of the host of the Philistines, and they felt that they themselves were as nothing to the Philistines. David had felt a union between himself and God; David was able to identify himself with God; he felt that the cause of the armies of Israel was the cause of the living God, and that the Philistines were arrayed

therefore against the power of God. But observe how this language of faith is instantly mistaken, and excites anger. If we look at the remark of Eliab to David we shall see this. You know the truth of this; the moment the world sees a power greater than its own, it calls it pride. It was so of old; it was so in the case of Joseph's brethren; they could revile the "dreamer," as they called him, yet Joseph only spake words of soberness and truth, when he related what God had shown to him; but his brethren, who were not of a like spirit to himself, could not bear it, when he stated what God had told him. So it was with Eliab, and therefore he rebuked David; but the truth is this—David was speaking a language which Eliab knew nothing about—the language of faith. The simple language of faith is to take God at His word, and to build securely upon it; and although the world may call this pride, yet there is nothing so like humility amongst all the graces that we find in the Word of God as that which entirely puts self on one side, and simply depends upon what God says. This is the spirit of a little child; if there be anything for which children are remarkable, it is the implicit confidence that they put in what is told them. We often smile at their credulity; but we might learn a lesson from it by which to serve God more faithfully. I say, therefore, that this is real humility—for there is no humility so real as that which ceases from self-confidence and leans on Christ. David lost sight of himself entirely—he lost sight of everything that was human, and he saw only God, and he had learned, by seeing the power of God, that "no flesh should glory in His presence." II. But now let us look at the other principle—**THE STRENGTH AND WISDOM OF THE POWER OF FAITH**. Observe what David said in the twenty-ninth verse, when Eliab rebuked him. David said—"What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" There was deep cause; David saw the army of Israel as the army of God. It was not Israel that had been defied, in his estimation, by the Philistine, but God, and there was cause to act and there was cause to speak, when God's honour was outraged. And so there is now. Your object in daily life should be identical with David's, as David's was identical with our Lord's. When our Lord stood before Pilate He said—"For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." And what was David doing? He was bearing witness unto the truth. David drew from a source which is untouched by circumstances. His need was the same, and therefore his resource was the same, and therefore his confidence was the same. It was the Lord; and it was all one to Him to deliver from the bear and from the giant. It was the same principle that animated Caleb and Joshua. When they saw those Anakims, they did not adopt the language of the unbelieving ten, but they said, "Ye are meat for us." Why? "The Lord is with us." That was the secret of their confidence. III. And this leads us to consider **THE VICTORY OF DAVID**. It is not the nature of the weapons, but the arm that wields them; and the smooth pebble from the brook, when winged by the power of God, is able to slaughter the great giant of Gath. So with the preaching of the Word of God. The world despises preaching as an instrument of God; but it is God's weapon. The giant despised David; but still David was God's instrument to overthrow him. David, in his humility, put himself out of the question; there was no desire to magnify himself, but he was desirous to hide himself, that God's glory might appear. What are we, any of us? What is the strongest believer here? He is before God as nothing. But what is God to that man? God is all, and God is everything to him, in all his circumstances. (*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*) **David and Goliath**:—I. And I think the first thing we are to learn is, that **THERE ARE ALWAYS GIANTS TO FIGHT**. Some of these giants are in our hearts—wicked thoughts, wicked desires, wicked feelings. Here is a boy with a bad temper; and what an ugly thing that is to control! How many boys have that Goliath to fight! Here is a girl who is vain, always thinking that she is better-dressed and better-looking, with a nicer house and richer father, than some of her little friends. She has giant Pride to fight and conquer before she can be and do as God wishes. Almost everybody has some particular giant to contend with, who is taller and stronger than all the rest. It may be bad temper, or envy, or carelessness, or disobedience, or laziness, or something else. "I want" and "I wish" are giants that we meet almost every day. Children are interested in stories of a time, hundreds of years ago, when men went about armed and on horseback, fighting robbers and relieving the oppressed; and they wish sometimes that they could have lived in those days of chivalry, as they are called. No need of wishing that: if any boy or girl really means to serve God, they will find that

there is plenty of fighting to be done nowadays. To learn to say "no," and to say it quickly when they are tempted to do wrong; to overcome all the persuasions to sin of which the world is full, and so to live good, pure Christian lives—that is the hardest kind of battle, to slay these giants we meet every day—this is the noblest victory of all. II. A second lesson to be learned is, that **DAVIDS ARE ALWAYS WANTED IN THE WORLD.** What a happy thing it was for the Israelites that the shepherd boy came down to the camp that morning. The right sort of young people is just what is wanted. If they are brave and conscientious and in earnest to do good, how much they can accomplish. But remember one thing: David did his work in his own way. The world wants young Davids who are willing and glad to do what they know how to do. General Saul with all his army of grown-up men did not succeed in doing as much as David with his sling. There is a song we sometimes sing, called "Dare to be a Daniel." It is a very good title, but we ought to have another, called "Be sure and be a David." The right kind of little people in the right place—what would this great world do without them? III. And then we are to learn one other lesson from this story: that **THE BEST HELP COMES FROM GOD.** David found it so. What an idea he had of God's willingness and power to assist him. It seemed to the people as if David killed the giant, but really it was because God helped David that Goliath was conquered. And this is the only way in which anybody gets along well in this world. When we are in any sort of difficulty, the way out of it is to ask God to help us. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *David and Goliath; Christ and Satan:*—

I. **THE COMBATANTS.** An example of the duel of battle; the destiny of two opposing hosts committed to their representatives. The one was flushed with past victories, insolent, rancorous towards people of God. The other unskilled in war. As we see Christ and Satan drawing near to the conflict, we feel that there is more than meets the eye. Hell and heaven, light and darkness, are represented there. Life or death eternal for thousands and tens of thousands hang upon the issue. In the temptation for us, and in our stead, Christ met the foe of God and man. He takes up man's cause, and espouses God's quarrel, and enters the lists against our dreadful and exultant enemy. 1. Mark Satan's audacity! We do not marvel at his assailing man; but to confront the Son of God! Shall we think lightly of such an adversary? 2. Bear in mind the admonition of the king. David went not into the battle until he had received a heavenly and qualifying unction. So Christ went forth in might of the Holy Ghost (Luke iv. 1, 2). "Lead us not into temptation" is the teaching of One who did not rush into it unbidden. II. **THE COMBAT.** 1. The time. Forty days did the champion of Gath draw near; forty days was Christ tempted of the devil. At the close of that period came the decisive encounter. Goliath triply armed with sword, spear, shield; Satan with the same threefold temptation by which he had overcome man in Paradise. Compare 1 John ii. 16 with Genesis iii. 6, and trace the same elements in threefold temptation of Christ. 2. The armour. David would not go in the armour of Saul; had not "proved them." The armour of Christ not of human fashioning; "armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left" (John xiv. 30). No flaw in that heavenly panoply. 3. The weapons. David had no quiver but his scrip; no arrows save pebbles from the brook, and with these he conquered. Christ vanquished Satan by sentences of Holy Writ, well directed from the sling of truth: "It is written;" again and again, "It is written." 4. The lesson. What a guide for us in our conflicts and temptations! Lay aside all earthly confidences; discard our own strength. The victory of David was a victory for all Israel. The vauntings of the Philistines silenced by the son of Jesse. The victory of Christ is a victory for His people. (*W. P. Walsh, D.D.*) *The contest between David and Goliath:*—Eliab did not like to see the young stripling exciting the interest and admiration of the soldiers, and showing the cowardice of older men like himself. He had probably regarded his brother with a jealous eye, ever since he himself had been passed over by Samuel, and David had been anointed with the holy oil. David calmly replied, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" Three different interpretations have been given of these words. One is to understand David as excusing his conduct on the ground that his speech was mere talk. As if he had said, "What have I now done? Is it not a word?" As David, however, clearly showed that his words were more than talk, and meant action, this view seems quite inadmissible. Another is, to understand David as excusing his conduct on the ground that the proud challenge of Goliath fully justified his burning indignation and patriotic zeal. But the natural and most satisfactory

view seems to be, to regard David's words as a direct reply to Eliab's charge. Eliab implied that he had left his sheep out of mere curiosity to see the battle. But David answers, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause? Have I not come, as I already told thee, in obedience to my father's command?" This calm reply shows that Eliab's fierce and insulting words had not ruffled the quiet self-possession of David. It was a noble victory over himself. His calm patience was allied to indomitable perseverance. Instead of being cowed by the blustering rage of Eliab, David went on his course with the same glowing enthusiasm as before. The heroic courage, which rested on past exploits, and the unbounded confidence that the Lord would be with him in the conflict with Goliath, as He had been with him in other conflicts not less formidable, overcame the hesitation of the King. Enthusiastic, courageous faith has a magnetic assimilating power. After Saul had accepted David as the champion of Israel, he sought to make him as efficient as he could. Had David worn them, and won with them the victory, Saul would have ascribed it in part to the armour, and claimed some share of the glory. But as David, when he assayed to go, found the armour all too cumbersome, he said, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." His determination to fight only with the weapons with which he was familiar, was a stroke of military genius. The thought that was uppermost in the majority of the onlookers, was in all likelihood that the young man was going forth to certain death; but in all there was an earnest desire, and from many an ardent prayer to God, for his success. Goliath's boastful style of speech was common amongst ancient warriors. Homer represents Hector saying to Ajax in the Trojan war—

"And thou imperious! if thy madness wait
The lance of Hector, thou shalt meet thy fate.
That giant corse, extended on the shore,
Shall largely feed the fowls with fat and gore."

It was probably not till David had thus confidently replied to the challenge of Goliath, that the champion of the Philistines deigned to rise, and proceeded with his shield-bearer before him, to fight with one whom he regarded as an insignificant and presumptuous opponent. Skill in slinging was common in those days; and some had attained to extraordinary precision in the art. It is said of an early period of the Judges, that in the tribe of Benjamin "there were 700 chosen men left-handed: every one could sling stones at an hair's breadth and not miss (Judges xx. 16). But when we think of the intense excitement and the great risk of such a duel, the ever-shifting movements of Goliath, and the small part of his forehead left uncovered by the helmet of brass, David's feat in hitting the one vulnerable part of his body, was one of the most extraordinary kind. Augustine thus beautifully, though fancifully, improves the incident: "So our Divine David, the good Shepherd of Bethlehem, when he went forth at the temptation to meet Satan—our ghostly Goliath—chose five stones out of the brook. He took the five books of Moses out of the flowing stream of Judaism. He took what was solid out of what was fluid. He took what was permanent out of what was transitory. He took what was moral and perpetual out of what was ceremonial and temporary. He took stones out of a brook, and with one of them he overthrew Satan. All Christ's answers to the Tempter are moral precepts, taken from one Book of the Law (Deuteronomy), and He prefaced his replies with the same words, 'It is written,' and with this sling and stone of Scripture, He laid our Goliath low, and He has taught us by His example how we may also vanquish the Tempter." (*T. Kirk.*) *David and Goliath*:—An occurrence in the life of Joshua, the remembrance of which may have often refreshed the mind of David, may well introduce us to the subject of this day's meditation. It is recorded in Joshua (vers. 13-15). Before him lies the strong, impregnable fortress of the enemy at Jericho. A war, pregnant with important issues, must now be waged. It is night. The history tells us that "Joshua lifted up his eyes"—we know to what place he raised them. He held communion with God. What befel him then? Suddenly Joshua saw at a little distance a lofty figure, clothed in warlike armour, standing before him. Now Joshua knew at least that he had to do with the representative of the Most High, who alone determines what shall be the issues of battle. He is courageous in being able to stay himself on this Ally. From that time forward he walked before God in genuine humility;

realised God's presence with him wherever he went; confidently expected it; trusted in the Lord; at all times asked first what was His will, and turned away from whatever might be displeasing to Him. And the Lord crowned him with victory after victory, with blessing after blessing. David walked in the footsteps of Joshua, and the word was verified in him, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye will remove mountains." Let us, in contemplating this incident, direct our attention (1.) To Israel's danger; and then (2.) To the deliverance wrought for them by God by means of David.

I. ISRAEL'S DANGER. The history shows us the Philistines already at Shochoh, three German miles south-west from Jerusalem, encamped on high, level ground. Opposite to them the host of Israel is encamped also on a chain of hills. The Philistines, for the increase of their glory, sought to show to the world that their warlike strength consisted not only in the multitude of their host, but in the personal warlike dexterity and skill in battle of every separate warrior. They challenged, therefore, the enemy to a duel—a practice common in war among the ancients, as Homer testifies. On the issue of this combat he places the fortune and the future condition of the whole kingdom. Contempt, such as that expressed in his challenge to the people of Jehovah, could not be more scornful. The cause which gave rise to this war which had newly broken out, was closely connected with the interests of religion, as was, indeed, the case with most of the wars of ancient times. The heathen fought for the honour of their god Dagon. They wished him to appear to all the world as the true God. Jehovah, on the other hand, must appear to be but a phantom, a shadow without substance, and only worthy of being despised. In these circumstances the children of Israel had reason to trust with joyful confidence in the arm of the Almighty, and, certain of victory, to accept the challenge to battle made by the heathen. But what happened? Israel is afraid because their king is faint-hearted. They ventured not, with child-like faith, to appropriate the promises of Jehovah. The wings of faith, which would have borne them up to the Lord of Hosts in confident trust, are broken. What will be the result?

II. DELIVERANCE WROUGHT BY MEANS OF DAVID. David, as a faithful, obedient son, accustomed without hesitation to do as his father commanded, even when the commands did not correspond with his own inclinations, rose up early in the morning, and came near to the encampment at the very moment when the armies stood in battle array over against each other. With the greatest astonishment David perceives what is now going on. "How," he asks himself, "is the last spark of faith extinguished in Israel? or is His arm shortened, who once buried in the waves of the Red Sea Pharaoh with his horsemen and his horses; who, at the prayer of Moses, destroyed the power of Amalek, and guided Gideon so that with his three hundred men he was able to sweep from the field the thousands of Midian." He was not able altogether to conceal from those that stood near him the feelings that were in his mind; and the impetuosity with which he added the question, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" fully revealed his inmost thoughts. Eliab sufficiently knew the brave boy to believe that wherever the honour of God was concerned he would courageously undertake the most perilous enterprise. "But what," thinks Eliab, "will be the result of such an undertaking? Not only the death of the boy, but also, at the same time, the overthrow of Israel; and, worse than even this, the defeat of Israel's God in the eyes of the heathen!" Thus with Eliab also thought his two brothers. We see that even with them faith and courage had disappeared. David replied to the reproachful words of Eliab by quietly asking him, "What have I now done? Has it not been commanded me?" But the subsequent conduct of the king showed in him a total misapprehension of the position which David occupied when he announced his heroic resolution. He commanded that David should be armed with his armour, his helmet, and the coat of mail, together with his sword. David did not offer any opposition, seeing that such was the will of his master; yet he doubted not but that the king himself would soon be convinced that such an equipment was not suitable for him. History has presented many and diverse examples in the sphere of the spiritual life similar to this heroic march of the youthful David. I now call to your remembrance only a Luther, who, despite the doubts of timid learned men, threw aside the heavy armour of scholastic wisdom, and, stepping forward in freedom, vanquished the giant of Rome with the five heads of his Catechism. And might we not here also make mention of such witnesses and combatants in the region of the Church, as with holy courage have broken

through the restraints of homiletic or liturgic forms, and, in the free effusions and creations of their divinely-anointed spirits, have given the tone to a new and more animating style of preaching, and thereby have opened the way to a new quickening and elevating of the life of the Church into greater fruitfulness? But what says Saul now, in this unexpected state of affairs? Saul said, "Inquire thou whose son the stripling is." But when, soon afterwards, David appeared in person before the king, with the head of the Philistine in his hands, he addressed to him the same question, "Whose son art thou, thou young man?" David simply replied, with the expression of genuine modesty, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite," and then stood quietly waiting the further commands of his royal master. This incident in the narrative, it must be admitted, has in it something strange. Saul did not recognise in David the youthful singer, who had formerly, with the melody of his harp, banished from him the evil spirit, and who on that account had gained his love, and had been received into the number of his pages and armourers. Many interpreters, misled by this surprising circumstance, have been induced to regard the chapter from which our text is taken as a historical supplement to that immediately preceding, and to place the battle with the Philistine before the time of the first appearance of David at the royal court. But this is a mere arbitrary proceeding. How can we explain, then, the enigma of Saul's ignorance of David? In the first place, Saul, to heighten the splendour of his throne, had surrounded himself not only with a body-guard a thousand strong, and a choir of musicians, but also, as already noticed, with a company of pages and young armour-bearers; and it was not to be expected that amid the continual storms which marked his reign, he could know and remember the names and descent of each one of all these bands. Further, David, by his return to take charge again of his father's flocks at Bethlehem, had, as it seems, for a considerable time been out of the sight of Saul, who had perhaps now only some dim recollections of the comfortless condition in which he was at the time of the first visit of the shepherd boy, but retained no longer any clear remembrance of his person. Lastly, it might possibly be that it was only of the descent and the birthplace of the boy that Saul had now no longer any recollection; for he put the question to Abner merely as to whose son the youth was. Thus Israel saw themselves honoured with another remarkable evidence that the God of their fathers was still truly with them, and that faith in the promises of their God, when it knows how, with simplicity, to take fast hold of them, can accomplish all things. In the third Psalm, David sings: "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about." (*P. W. Krummacher, D.D.*) *David's conflict with Goliath*:—This valley has generally been identified with that which now bears the name of Wady-es-Sumt—a valley running down from the plateau of Judah to the Philistine plain, not more than perhaps eight or ten miles from Bethlehem. The Philistine champion appears to have been a man of physical strength corresponding to the massiveness of his body. Remembering the extraordinary feats of Samson, the Philistines might well fancy that it was now their turn to boast of a Hercules. And morning and evening for nearly six weeks, had his proud challenge been given, but never once accepted. Even Jonathan, who had faith enough and courage enough and skill enough for so much, seems to have felt himself helpless in this great dilemma. The explanation that has sometimes been given of his abstention, that it was not etiquette for a king's son to engage in fight with a commoner, can hardly hold water. Jonathan showed no such squeamishness at Michmash; and besides, in cases of desperation etiquette has to be thrown to the winds. Of the host of Israel, we read simply that they were dismayed. The coming of David upon the scene corresponded in its accidental character to the coming of Saul into contact with Samuel, to be designated for the throne. Everything seemed to be casual, yet those things which seemed most casual were really links in a providential chain leading to the gravest issues. One cannot but wonder whether, in offering his prayers that morning, David had any presentiment of the trial that awaited him, anything to impel him to unwonted fervour in asking God that day to establish the works of his hand upon him. There is no reason to think that he had. His prayers that morning were in all likelihood his usual prayers. And if he were sincere in the expression of his own sense of weakness, and in the supplication that God would strengthen him for all the day's duties, it was enough. Oh! how little we know what may be

before us, on some morning that dawns on us just as other days, but which is to form a great crisis in our life. How little the boy that is to tell his first lie that day thinks of the serpent that is lying in wait for him! How little the party that are to be upset in the pleasure boat and consigned to a watery grave think how the day is to end! Should we not pray more really, more earnestly if we did realise these possibilities? True, indeed, the future is hid from us, and we do not usually experience the impulse to earnestness which it would impart. But is it not a good habit, as you kneel each morning, to think, "For aught I know, this may be the most important day of my life. The opportunity may be given me of doing a great service in the cause of truth and righteousness; or the temptation may assail me to deny my Lord and ruin my soul. O God, be not far from me this day; prepare me for all that Thou preparest for me!" The distance from Bethlehem being but a few hours' walk, David starting in the morning would arrive early in the day at the quarters of the army. It is evident that the consideration that moved David himself was that the Philistine had defied the armies of the living God. Could there have been a nobler exercise of faith, a finer instance of a human spirit taking hold of the Invisible; fortifying itself against material perils by realising the help of an unseen God; resting on His sure word as on solid rock; flinging itself fearlessly on a very sea of dangers; confident of protection and victory from Him? There are two ways in which faith may assert its supremacy. One, afterwards very familiar to David, is, when it has first to struggle hard with distrust and fear; when it has to come to close quarters with the suggestions of the carnal mind, grapple with these in mortal conflict, strangle them, and rise up victorious over them. For most men, most believing men, it is only thus that faith rises to her throne. The other way is to spring to her throne in a moment; to assert her authority, free and independent, utterly regardless of all that would hamper her, as free from doubt and misgiving as a little child in his father's arms, conscious that whatever is needed that father will provide. It was this simple, child-like, but most triumphant exercise of faith that David showed in undertaking this conflict. Happy they who are privileged with such an attainment! In beautiful contrast with the scornful self-confidence of Goliath was the simplicity of spirit and the meek, humble reliance on God, apparent in David's answer. What a reality God was to David! He advanced "as seeing Him who is invisible." Guided by the wisdom of God, he chose his method of attack, with all the simplicity and certainty of genius. Conscious that God was with him, he fearlessly met the enemy. A man of less faith might have been too nervous to take the proper aim. Undisturbed by any fear of missing, David hurls the stone from his sling, hits the giant on the unprotected part of his forehead, and in a moment has him reeling on the ground. It is not possible to read this chapter without some thought of the typical character of David, and indeed the typical aspect of the conflict in which he was now engaged. We find an emblematic picture of the conquest of the Messiah and His Church. (IV. G. Blaikie, D.D.)

Vers. 36, 37. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear.—*The lion and the bear*:—David's first battles were with a lion and a bear. His next with the Philistine Goliath, and after that with many enemies, with the Amalekites, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, the Edomites, and others. It seems to me that you have two enemies to contend with in your youth—violence and bearishness. Until you have conquered these you will not have proved yourselves worthy to go against greater foes. 1. Violence of temper is the lion with which you have to fight. Angry passions are the first passions that assail you. Anger is natural; and in itself is not wrong. But it is sinful when it masters you. When a lion is in a cage, and allowed no opportunity of tearing and killing, you do not fear him, but when he breaks out of the cage, then everyone takes to flight. Anger is not wrong when the cause is just, the feeling moderate, and the desire of punishment proportioned to the offence. 2. The other enemy you have to contend with is Bearishness. The greatest charm in a boy is politeness, or civility; and this is not so often met with as one could wish. Boys and girls are now allowed so much liberty, that they behave as if they owed no consideration, respect, or deference, to their elders and betters. It used to be said that bears never allowed their cubs to be seen out of the cave in which they were born until they had licked them into shape, for infant bear cubs were misformed hideous little beasts, but the mother by pains and constant licking got

them into something like shape. I am afraid that too many little human bear cubs are allowed out before they are licked into shape. Now what is the cause of bearishness? of cubbishness? It is thought of self. The boy or girl whose mind is fixed on self is sure not to have thought of the wants and wishes of others, and to be without the respect due to others. In the upper classes of society it would be thought so disgraceful for ladies and gentlemen to turn out bear cubs into the world, that they are obliged to lick them into shape, and make them learn "manners." They put on manners as they put on their clothes. But it would be much better if the Bear were killed, instead of being hidden in a cupboard. It too often happens with those who have been taught to be polite and courteous, without being taught also to conquer the evil principle which lies at the root of cubbishness, that on occasions the bad beast breaks out, bursts through all restraints, and then we see that gentle manner was put on, and is not real. The bear is in the cupboard and hidden, but it is alive and impatient of restraint, and takes the first opportunity to show itself. Selfishness is the mother of bearishness. If the lion is feared the bear is loathed. And the bearish child is a most offensive child, and grows up into a most offensive man or woman. Bearishness is exactly the reverse of what should be the character of a Christian. The Christian religion softens, and refines, it teaches all to be kindly to one another, to love as brethren, to be pitiful and courteous. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *The lion and the bear: trophies hung up:*—We shall see what made David so calm and self-possessed as to venture where nobody else would venture, and take up the gauntlet and dare to be the champion of the living God.

I. THE CONFIDENCE OF DAVID. 1. The confidence of David was grounded upon his own personal experience. 2. You will notice that in his confidence there is a blending of the human with the Divine. Observe: "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them":—That is the human. "David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine":—That is the Divine side of it. Work for God with all your might, as if you did it all; but then always remember that "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." How is that Philistine to be killed? "By God," says one. True; but not without David. "By David," says another. Yes, but not without God. Put the Lord on the march with David, and you put the Philistines into untimely graves. 3. I want you to notice in David's confidence that he had so practically observed the service of the human side that he speaks of it first. If you did work valiantly by the help of the Spirit of God, you did do it, and should not refuse to say so. How are you to glorify God by denying the fruit of His Spirit? It is the glory of God that He led you to holy labour, and helped you in it. 4. Although David thus speaks of the human first, yet he speaks of the Divine most. 5. Now I want to go a little further, and show that David's confidence rested mainly in the immutability of God, the Divine Worker. 6. This leads me to observe that David's confidence also proceeded upon his firm conviction that, the immutable God being with him, he himself would be sufficient for the present emergency.

II. DAVID IS A VERY FIT AND WONDERFUL TYPE OF THE GREAT SON OF DAVID, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The lion-slayer—The giant-killer:*—What was the pith of David's argument? What were the five smooth stones which he threw at the head of carnal reasoning? **I. RECOLLECTIONS.** Now, what did David recollect, for I want you to remember the same? 1. He recollected, first, that, whatever his present trial might be, he had been tried before, tried when he was but a young man, peacefully employed in keeping his flocks. 2. He remembered, too, that he had been tried frequently. He had been not only attacked by a lion, but also by a bear. 3. David recollected that he had risked all in the prosecution of his duty. 4. He remembered that he had on that occasion gone alone to the fray. 5. David also recollected that on that occasion when he smote the lion and the bear he had nothing visible to rely upon, but simply trusted his God. 6. David recollected also that the tactics which he adopted on that occasion were natural, artless, and vigorous. 7. David remembered that by confidence in God his energetic fighting gained the victory. **II. NOW FOR REASONINGS.** David used an argument in which no flaw can be found. He said "The case of this Philistine is a parallel one to that of the lion. If I act in the same manner by faith in God with this giant as I did with the lion, God is the same, and therefore the result will be the same." That seems to me to be very clear reasoning, and I bid you

adopt it. Let us now consider the case, and we shall see that it really was parallel. There was the flock, defenceless; here was Israel, God's flock, defenceless, too, with no one to take up its cause. He was alone that day when he smote the lion, and so he was this day when he was to confront his enormous foe. As for that Philistine, he felt that in him he had an antagonist of the old sort. It was brute force before, it was brute force now: it might take the shape of a lion or a bear or a Philistine, but David considered that it was only so much flesh and bone and muscle, so much brag or roar, tooth or spear. The whole argument is this, in the one case by such tactics we have been successful, trusting in God, and therefore in a similar case we have only to do the same, and we shall realise the same victory. I know a man who to-day says, "Yes, what we did in years gone by we did in our heroic age, but we are not so enthusiastic now." And why not? We are so apt to magnify our former selves, and think of our early deeds as of something to be wondered at, but not to be attempted now. Fools that we are! They were little enough in all conscience, and ought to be outdone. This resting on our oars will not do, we are drifting down with the tide. David did not say, "I slew a lion and a bear, I have had my turn at such bouts, let somebody else go and fight that Philistine:" yet we have heard people say, "When I was a young man I taught in the Sunday school, I used to go out preaching in the villages, and so on." Oh, and why not do it now? Methinks you ought to be doing more instead of less. III. The last thing is RESULTS. The results were: 1. David felt he would, as he did before, rely upon God alone. 2. David resolved again to run all risks once more, as he had done before. 3. David's next step was to put himself into the same condition as on former occasions, by divesting himself of everything that hampered him. The ultimate result was that the young champion came back with Goliath's head in his hand, and equally sure triumphs await every one of you if you rely on the Lord, and act in simple earnestness. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *How may the well-discharge of our present duty give us assurance of help from God for the well-discharge of all future duties:*—This question hath two parts in it, and cannot be so well grounded upon a single text; therefore I shall name three or four, namely, 1 Sam. xvii. 34—37; Psalm xxvii. 14; Prov. x. 29; 2 Chron. xv. 2. I name these several scriptures as so many proofs of the truth of the point, that it is a case very agreeable to the Scriptures and to the analogy of faith. I. WHAT IS OUR PRESENT DUTY? 1. What "duty" is, in the general nature and notion of it. It is an act of obedience to the will of our superiors. Duty is that which is due from man to God: it is "justice toward God." 2. Something is our present duty. God hath filled up all our time with duty: not one moment left at our own disposal. 3. Nothing that is sinful and in itself unlawful can be our duty at any time; and therefore, to be sure, not our present duty. 4. Every thing that is in itself lawful is not therefore our duty. "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient." (1 Cor. vi. 12.) 5. Every thing that is commanded, and is in its time and place our duty, may not be our present duty. Affirmatives bind "always;" that is, we can never be discharged from that obligation that lies upon us to worship God: but we are not bound "at all times" to the outward acts of worship; for then we should do nothing else. 6. That which God now requires of you, and in doing of which you may most glorify God and edify your neighbour—that is undoubtedly your present duty. "How shall we know this?" Always look within your calling for your present duty; for there it lies. General: As we are Christians, so all saints are of the same calling: "Called to be saints." (Rom. i. 7.) Particular: So we differ in our callings. Some are called to the magistracy, some to the ministry; some are masters, some servants; some called to this, some to that, trade or occupation. Much of the duties of our Christian calling do follow us into our particular callings. As duties of worship must be performed in our families every day, let our particular calling be what it will; so the same graces must be exercised in our particular callings, which were required in our general callings: the same graces do follow us into our particular callings and into all the works of our hands. You see, your present duty lies in your present work, in the daily business of your particular callings. Herein lies the nature of all practical holiness—to do everything after a godly sort. The directions I give you relate only to the religious manner of doing what you do; though it is God that "instructs you to discretion" in all worldly business. (Isai. xxviii. 26.) Whatever your skill and insight is in your calling, prayer may make you wiser: you may obtain a more excellent spirit in your way than you now have, if you seek it of God.

(Exod. xxxv. 31-33.) Though you are left to the use of your reason as men, yet faith must go along with it as you are Christians. Therefore I shall show you how to put forth an act of reason in faith. How may we know when reason and faith go together? 1. When, at our entrance upon any business, we seek wisdom and understanding from God, stirring up our reason by our faith, looking up to Him from whom "cometh every good and perfect gift" (James i. 17) that He would "instruct us unto discretion." 2. When, in answer to faith and prayer, thoughts do come in that clear up our way to us, and do put us into a right method, pointing out such probable means, inclining to such apposite counsel, as in a rational way tend to the expediting of that business which we are about. 3. When, under the greatest assurances of our own reason, we yet live in a humble dependence upon God for success. He puts forth an act of reason in faith, who trusts to God, and not to his own reason. It is our duty to make use of it as men, though as Christians we ought not to trust in it. (1.) Consider present Providences. (2.) Consult thy conscience. (3.) Consider what present temptation thou art under. (4.) Consult with the word of God. (5.) Devote thyself in sincerity to the fear of God, through the whole course of thy life. But what if, after all this, it should so fall out that two duties should press upon my conscience for present performance, and I cannot either by reason or Scripture, determine which to do first, but do hang in suspense, "am in a strait betwixt two?" (Phil. i. 23.) This is hardly to be supposed: but, admit it to be thy case, according to thy present judgment; then 1. Sit down once more, and consider. 2. If of two duties you cannot resolve which is most your duty at present, then resolve upon both, and begin where you will. God will not be extreme in that case. Do one, and leave not the other undone, but be sure to find time for that also. 3. Beg of God to resolve thee. "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" (Psalm cxix. 5.) "Shall I go up to Hebron? or shall I not?" (2 Sam. ii. 1.) God will "teach" thee what to do. (Psalm xxv. 12.) "He shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 5, 6.) Application. 1. All the sins of your lives break in upon you, through the omission of your present duty. 2. Whatever you do in the room of a present duty is not acceptable to God. 3. If you do not now perform your present duty, you can never perform it. 4. You can have no trial of your spirit, nor of the truth of your state: it is impossible that you should ever prove your sincerity, but by a conscientious discharge of your present duty. 5. You cannot walk evenly with God, if you do not your present duty. Some men walk very unevenly: there are so many gaps in their obedience; they move from duty to duty, quite "leaping" over some, and lightly touching upon others, as if they had no great mind to any: they act grace so abruptly that it gives no continued sense; we know not where to find them. There are so many vacant spaces, so many blanks of omission, so many blots and blurs of commission: they drop a duty here, and another half-a-mile off; so that you cannot say, "A man of God went this way." (1 Kings xiii. 12.) 6. You must begin somewhere, at some present duty: why not at this? It will be as difficult, nay, more difficult, to come to Christ to-morrow than it is to-day: therefore "to-day hear His voice, and harden not your heart." (Psalm xc. 7, 8.) Break the ice now, and by faith venture upon thy present duty, wherever it lies: do what you are now called to. II. HOW THE WELL-DISCHARGE OF OUR PRESENT DUTY MAY ENCOURAGE US TO HOPE IN GOD FOR HIS HELP AND ASSISTANCE IN ALL FUTURE DUTIES. 1. It is promised. (2 Chron. xv. 2.) Present grace is a pledge of future grace. To him that hath, more shall be given. (Luke xix. 17, 26.) 3. The experience of the saints confirms this. See Psalm xviii. 26, 30-32. 4. The saints made this an argument in prayer. (Psalm xxxviii. 20-22; cxix. 30, 31, 94, 121, 173; xxv. 21.) 5. A conscientious discharge of our present duty fits and disposes our minds to the next duty. 6. By the well-discharge of our present duty we may attain assurance of salvation. (Col. iii. 23, 24.) (Thomas Cole, A.M.)

Ver. 37. Go, and the Lord be with thee.—*The conscious presence of God with us in our personal life*:—The Philistines originally formed part of the great Semitic family. They wandered from Palestine to Crete, and afterwards, returning to their former homes, re-established themselves, and built their five great cities, Gaza, Ashdod, Askalon, Gath, and Ekron. This representation respecting their early history is in harmony with their name, Philistine, "a wanderer." It accounts for the fact that the Philistines and the Israelites used a common language. It accords with the evidence given by the classic writers of Greece as to

the wide diffusion of the Shemitic race over the islands of the Mediterranean Sea; and it agrees with the practice referred to by them as having prevailed so extensively in warfare, of the enemy challenging the foe to a duel as the test of the power of either side arrayed for conflict. These Philistines had become very influential in Palestine. Occupying the coast, they were in possession of the trade carried on with Europe and Asia. In this chapter the Israelites are represented as engaged in hostilities with the Philistines, and as furnishing in this time of national difficulty a striking illustration of the extinction of faith. God had wrought wondrous deliverances on their behalf. We should have thought that, from the army of Israel encamped upon that chain of hills, there would have risen the voice of praise, and that, adapting "the song of Moses" to their present circumstances, they would have chanted right heartily, "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, will dash in pieces the enemy; and in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou wilt overthrow them that rise up against Thee." But instead of this, the very opposite was the case. They were filled with terror and alarm. "They were dismayed and greatly afraid." Nor let us be too ready to censure them, for we are very prone to act in the same way. Whatever may have been the emergencies through which God may have brought us in the past, we are too ready to overlook these deliverances when new difficulties arise in our path. It is said that when old Rome was in all her glory, and the Cæsars were exercising their mighty sway, one who was in trouble was communicating his sorrow to a certain philosopher, who, knowing that the mourner before him was a favourite with the Emperor, said to him, "Why mourn thus? Cæsar is your friend!" The thought of the friendship of the greatest earthly potentate, the philosopher considered, should assuage the mourner's grief, and inspire confidence and hope. And, even so, if we enjoy the friendship of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, what need have we to feel dismayed and fearful? What a contrast is presented between these hosts of Israel on the one hand, and David, the stripling the shepherd-youth, on the other! How beautiful he appears, clothed with true humility! "Clothe yourselves," said Tertullian, "with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, and with the purple of modesty and humility; so shall you have God Himself to be your suitor." "Saul," without much heart and hope, and almost despairing of his cause, "said, Go, and the Lord be with thee." I would adopt his words, and, not in his spirit, but would say to each of you, with reference to the year so soon to commence, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." "Go," and in all the duties which will devolve upon you in the new year, "the Lord be with thee," strengthening thee for their efficient and faithful discharge. "Go," and in all the perplexities which will arise, "the Lord be with thee" to guide and to direct thy way. "Go," and amidst the increasing responsibilities of thy life, "the Lord be with thee," giving thee increasing wisdom, and imparting to thee "more grace," and fulfilling to thee His ancient promise, "And as thy days, so shall thy strength be." "Go," and in all the darker experiences of life through which thou mayest have to pass, "the Lord be with thee," to comfort and to cheer thine heart, and to render thee victorious over the tribulations of the world! "The Lord be with thee." No, God's care for us is a care for us individually. He says, "I know thee by name." Our name distinguishes us from all others; it stands out for our separate individuality as apart from all others. And even so, as distinctly we are regarded by God. He does not merely look broadly over the race, but He sets each member of it apart; each single life stands out, distinct and clear, in the light of His presence. Then, "Go, and the Lord be with thee!" "With thee," lad or lassie, entering, with the new year, upon a new situation, going into fresh surroundings, and having to lay the foundations of that calling which is to be your occupation through life. "With thee," young man or maiden, just leaving the harbour of home. "With thee," man of business, who must, in the future, as in the past, be oft overborne with anxious care. "With thee," suffering one, with weakened and shattered frame. "With thee," aged pilgrim, leaning on thy staff, and gradually descending the hill of life—"the Lord be with thee." (S. D. Hillman.)

Ver. 39, **I cannot go with these. I have not proved them.**—*Suitable equipment*:—The words recall to you at once the whole vivid story of the combat between the stripling David and the Philistine giant Goliath. It is a simple tale from the memories of border warfare in an early and somewhat rude time. There

are two ways in which David might have forfeited his victory. I. First, **HE MIGHT HAVE FORFEITED IT BY A CARELESS NEGLECT OF THE SIMPLE OPPORTUNITIES OF A BOY.** He had only to keep the sheep. It would have been boy-like to have gone after play or after comrades and leave the flock. It would have been the different but equally fatal mistake of a gifted nature to dream away the hours with his back on the turf and his face to the sky, building air-castles of future exploits, the while the beasts preyed on the straying sheep. David avoided the one mistake and the other. He had his play, indeed; that skill which sends the stone like a bullet to the Philistine's brow will not have come to such perfection without many a shot at passing quarry or jutting rock; but it was play which made him fitter for work, training him in the free use of the favourite weapon of his tribe; making his arm suppler and stronger, and his eye more keen. And he had his battle, too, in his own way; he was watchful to detect and bold to face the prowling and preying beast. And though these may seem simple things, yet to the doer of them there was a strong sense and clear knowledge that there was a power with him in them, and if his conflict with the lion and the bear prepared him to face Goliath by steadying his nerve and strengthening his self-reliance it did so much more by giving him proof of the supporting and protecting presence of his God. Is it not the fact that one of the most frequent causes of waste and loss here is to be found in what I may call the adjournment of responsibility? I am not thinking of the man who wants to taste the pleasures of sin for a time; nor of the man who shirks all his work and fails in his examinations. I am thinking of men who take things as they come and do not look beyond; who interpret the phrase "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" as a charter for postponing troublesome thoughts of future responsibility; who think that it will be time enough to attend to those things when they come. II. But David had a second danger to avoid: **IT WAS THE DANGER OF UNPROVEN ARMOUR.** We can feel that a twofold instinct guided him right; the royal armour was grand, but he knew that he would be uneasy in it; and meanwhile his fingers twitched on the sling-strings with the half-conscious sense of how they could hurl against that blustering front. What is the danger of unproven armour for any of us? It is not difficult to see; and it may seem to be the very opposite of that which we have considered. It is the danger of those who look forward, not too little, but too confidently, and who do so because they believe themselves amply ready to face life. They feel full armed with well-appointed mail and weapons; it may be with all the adaptable resources of high academical and social culture; it may be with the keen thoughts, and bright ideals, social and philanthropic, which they deem to characterise their generation. Or, most probably of all, it may be with confidence in the strength of Divine truth and a Divine system, which they have themselves embraced, and in the strength of which it would be faithless to doubt that they will succeed with others. Far be it to speak disparagingly of such as these, they have much in them of the mettle of the future warrior: the day was to come when David too would do valiantly with sword and spear. But they have much to learn. The shield and sword, the spear and armour of God and of His Church are not for the first comer to wield with mastery. Doctrine the most true, arguments the most convincing, ideas the most lovely, will somehow be found not to strike home; and it will be well for the user if hampered and perhaps wounded he is not tempted in reaction of disheartenment or cynicism to cast them all aside and turn his back upon the battle. We have, then, here another danger, and opposite though it seems, it may really be combined, and often is combined with the other. The man who adjourns responsibility will think that he can put on the whole armour at pleasure in the future, and that in the strength and completeness of a professional outfit he could be a match for any enemy. There are giants in these days, and "surely to defy Israel are they come up:" evils which are monstrous in their proportions and which have the peculiar note of scornful and cruel defiance towards God and man. There is the giant of sensuality in all its forms. There is the giant of worldliness: the domineering power of prevailing fashion, or of so-called public opinion, or of stolid indifference to every higher call. And third brother to these there is the giant of unbelief. These are giants, and now as then we want men to meet them. And not seldom it is to the stripling that the task should fall. He is not dazed and weary with the daily bellowing of the giant's challenges. He comes with a fresh eye, with an unbroken nerve, with a quick fire of zeal. Place for the young man against the giant! But at that moment all will depend upon what he is and what he brings. They must be well proved, he

must be master of them, and they may have in them an unsuspected force of swift and piercing strength. What, to drop the figures, will this mean? It will mean first that a man who is to do good service against public evils must have first fought his own fights. He will have known, perhaps, in very plain reality, what it is to have the beasts come up against him. To meet the lion and the bear is specially the young man's task. It is from the wilderness of temptation that David and David's Lord go forth to the help of the Lord and His people against the mighty. And then next, the men who are to be champions must bring with them genuine, first-hand, realised truth. We want men who have put things to the proof and can speak of that they do know: who can not only repeat, but testify, who can wield the great appeal "*experto crede*." It is not much truth of which to a young man at the outset of experience this can be true: it may be only as the few smooth stones out of the brook: but, believe me, these may be enough. But what I mean is this: that while a man may fairly start by taking on trust many parts of that which he believes, there must be some part in it, some aspect of it, which he has proved for himself. It has been truly said that it is unchristian to assert that to rightly understand the faith one must have passed through doubt. But it is Christian in modesty and truthfulness to say that in a real and adequate sense a man can hardly be a champion who has not felt the stress and strain upon his faith of the mysteries and difficulties round about us, whose imagination they have never awed, whose reason they have never puzzled, whose sympathies they have never wrung. But there is one thing which must yet be said, for it underlies the whole. The victory of David was won not only by the sling and stone, but by the proved and trusted presence of God. There is the strength which speaks in words which we have not yet learnt to separate from David. "The Lord is my strength in whom I will trust. By Thee I have run through a troop and by my God I have leaped over a wall. It is God that girdeth me with strength." (*E. S. Talbot, D.D.*) *Impossible armour*:—The armour was good armour. Sword, and helmet, and coat of mail, each was faultless—true metal, excellent temper, perfect workmanship. And it was a great honour to wear it: it was the king's own, the king lent it, and the king put it on. What was wanting? At first there is complacence. To refuse such honour seems ungracious or seems impossible. "Saul armed David with his armour—put a helmet of brass upon his head—armed him with a coat of mail: David girded the sword upon the armour, and assayed to go"—assayed, but went not. Why? "He had not proved it." "David said to Saul, I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them—and he put them off him." Anything better than the unproved. Better no armour than the awkward encumbrance of the unwonted and the untried. There is a warfare between all and each of us. It has two chief departments—but we need not stay to separate them very carefully—the faith, and the life. For each of these there is an equipment—call it preparation, call it education, or what you will: only remember that it is not all preliminary—it is lifelong, it is daily, it is new every morning. Most young men have some one who offers them his armour. In these days the schoolmaster is abroad even for the poorest. In all days the parent, for better or worse, is present in the home. The Church is, or ought to be, at hand everywhere, with its instructing and educating influences. All these may be described as offering to arm the young mind and the young soul for the battle of that life which has death in front of it. It is scarcely a reflexion upon this offer to say that it largely resembles Saul's offer to David. We hardly see how it could be otherwise. Parents and teachers must educate out of their own stores of experience. They cannot and they ought not to ask the child or the pupil what he has, and advise him to make the best of it. To a large extent he must be "clothed upon" with faiths and principles to be taken at first on trust. Any attempt to lay down rules of conduct in circumstances necessarily future, or to warn against evils not yet developed, whether because the age for them is not yet, or because the opportunity is not yet, must more or less partake of the character of arming David with Saul's coat of mail: the person addressed cannot yet have proved it, and yet the instructor durst not take the responsibility of deferring into an indefinite future the counsel or the warning which may at any moment become vital to the hearer when the voice which now speaks will be silent. Yet all the time he knows that he is uttering that which can scarcely be impressive, because it necessarily lacks the personal proving. What pains ought to be taken to enable the receiver to prove everything—so to bring down and bring home the instruction as that it may be, at least in

its germ, fruitful at once, operative, on the smallest scale, in the young life! But what shall we say when we pass from matters of conduct into matters of faith? Must there not, here at least, be an offer of helmet and sword which cannot by the nature of the case have been yet proved by the receiver? Great indeed is the responsibility of arming others, young or old, in our armour. Well were it if those who have the charge of minds would think more of it. Have they proved their own armour? Can they give a reason, to themselves and to God, for the faith with which they thus preoccupy another? "Am I my brother's keeper?"—always a solemn question—has no graver or more momentous application than to this matter of the transmission of religion. Yet not to transmit it is to be worse than an infidel. There must be an arming of one by another with the Christian panoply if Christianity itself is not to die out of the earth which it has re-made. We must prove, but we must assert when we have proved, the mighty verity, without which good were it not to have been born, that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." We pass to a later thought, and one more practical still. The helmet and the sword and the coat of mail of the Christian faith were first put upon us by others. We thank and we bless God for it. Never could we have forged them, never could we have found them, never could we have put them on, for ourselves. The armour put on must be proved afterwards. The faith of the childhood must be proved by the man. Risk not the battle of life—risk not the discharge from it—in unproved armour. "Prove all things," St. Paul said. "Prove the spirits," St. John wrote—meaning the professed inspirations of men who came saying, I have a message unto thee, O man, from God. "Prove your own selves," St. Paul said again—always the same word, though with seven various renderings in the English Bible. If I were on a platform, arguing with atheists, I should adopt one course. There I should be speaking to men not yet pledged, or pledged the other way. And upon them I should urge one argument, not always pressed as it ought to be—All questions must be argued in their appropriate region. I do not take the telescope to a leaf, nor the microscope to a star: I do not listen to a face, nor look at a voice: I do not taste a colour, nor smell a book. In the same way, if I am asked to believe that Christ died for me, or that God forgives me, or that prayer is heard, or that death is the gate of life, I do not consult Euclid or algebra about it; I know quite well that, true or false, that could not help the decision: no, I remind myself that I am a whole made up of many parts—conscience, feeling, affection, quite as really constituents of my whole being as memory, or intellect, or the critical faculty, cold and bald and naked; and that, if God has spoken, He is sure to have spoken not to one element but to the whole of me; and that therefore I must bring myself, the whole of me, to listen whether He has spoken; and if heart and soul find themselves powerfully affected by a professed revelation—if it seem to exercise an elevating and softening and sweetening influence upon the temper, and the conduct, and the intercourse with others, of those who believe and live it—if, in proportion as a man tries to live the Gospel, the life, the spirit, the man, is evidently ennobled and beautified—if he really finds the day, the separate day, made this or that, happy and bright and useful, or else heavy and slovenly and miserable, according as it is begun, continued and ended in communion with God through Christ, or the contrary—I see there a proof, real, if not by itself conclusive, that that revelation is from Him who made me. But now, speaking from a pulpit, and in a congregation of persons worshipping on the faith of Christ, the application of the call to prove all things takes a slightly different form. It bids us to bring to the proof the armour of Christian profession—which has been put upon us by education or tradition, by common consent or social propriety, or whatever else—by seeing whether it will or will not do for us what we have just now supposed it to do for those whose experience we have spoken of as evidence; whether it can make our lives pure and humble and noble; whether it will bear the strain put upon it by the particular trials which beset us in the course of daily life. O, if one half of the trouble were taken in proving ourselves that is bestowed upon challenging the legality of a dress or a posture, or making some preacher or writer an offender for a word, we should grow apace in that real Christianity which is first humility, and then patience, and then charity. The only, only question then is, Has the armour been proved? has it borne the brunt of trial? has it been kept huddled and kept burnished by a living heart-deep communion with the Author and the Finisher, with the Lord and Giver of Life? (C. J. Vaughan, D.D.) *God's fighters not to take the weapons of the world:*—God's fighters have often been

tempted to don Saul's armour, and it has always hampered them. It may have shielded them from some assaults, but it has robbed them of elasticity, and half stifled them. They are stronger far without than with it. As surely as the Church yields to the falsehood that it must be clothed with worldly power and wealth in order to fight worldly power, it surrenders its freedom and capacity to attack, though it may obtain a sort of defence. And it is not only in churches which are called "established" that the temptation of fighting the world with worldly weapons has been yielded to. Wherever Christian individuals or communities rely upon anything but the power of the indwelling Christ to make their work successful, and seek to eke out the one weapon which God gives into their hand, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," with others borrowed from the armoury of the world, they trammel themselves and invite defeat. The world laughs, just as Goliath no doubt chuckled to see the stripling walking, ungainly and stiff, in Saul's armour. It likes nothing better than to reduce Christians to impotence by getting them to arm themselves out of its stores, and to fight with weapons of the pattern of its own. Goliath had long practice in using sword and javelin; David had none. It is folly to fling aside the weapons that we are used to, and to take up with new ones, on the eve of a fight. Jesus taught us how His soldiers are to be attired if they are to conquer, when He said, "Tarry ye . . . till ye be clothed with power from on high." (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Ver. 40. **And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook.**—*The example of David in the use of means:*—There is much in these particulars to furnish matter for profitable meditation. Let us take them as our subject of discourse. In the first place we will consider how David reasoned from past mercies, and grounded upon them the expectation of future aid from above. We will then consider his readiness to make use of means notwithstanding his full confidence in the succour and protection of God. He tried the armour which Saul proposed, though he felt the assurance expressed in the words—"The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." 1. Now though David was yet but a stripling, he was evidently acting on the principle which he afterwards expressed in one of his Psalms. "Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice." He was already using past mercies as a pledge or promise of future; and encouraging himself by what God had done, in expecting Him to do yet more in his behalf. There is something singularly emphatic in those words of St. Paul to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed." They are the words of a man who was his own storehouse of evidence, who had gathered into himself so much of testimony to the origin of Christianity and the faithfulness of God, that he had no need in any moment of difficulty or trial, to have recourse to books or external witness in order to be assured that he trod a safe path. "I know whom I have believed;" there may have been a time when I required the evidence of miracle and prophecy in order to be convinced that I followed "no cunningly devised fable"—when I had to turn to the registered histories of the saints of other days to satisfy myself that I served a God who would never fail His people; but now my own experience has come into the place of external testimony and Christian biography; I have but to descend into myself, and there do I find graven on the tablets of memory such records of fulfilled promises and gracious interpositions as leave me nothing to seek from the archives of creation, or the volumes of history. And there can be given no reason why this should have been the case with St. Paul or David rather than with any amongst ourselves. We would, therefore, call on you all, to turn your own experience to account, and to go on, adding page after page to the volume whose want is not to be supplied by whole libraries of the narratives of others: for there is a warrant in the recorded account, of favours shown to ourselves which is incomparably beyond that of much greater favours shown to another. And will you tell me that nothing has happened to yourselves, of which you might make the use which David made of a former great deliverance? Aye, if this be your assertion it can only be because you receive mercies only to forget them. And we speak now to those who profess some attention to religion. Can you deny that God takes care of you in the midst of your sorrows—either wholly delivering you from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, or administering such supports as

enable you to feel the tribulation to be good? We are persuaded that this has been your experience, though you may have given but little heed to the storing the mind with mementoes of Divine love. You should keep the past before you if you would look the future calmly in the face. Every obstacle surmounted, every sorrow soothed, every want supplied, every fear dissipated, every tear dried, should be in reserve, ready to give evidence, on any new trial, as to the goodness and watchfulness of your Father in heaven. Shame on you if you cannot say, "I know whom I have believed." It is likely that the older you grow, the sterner will be the forms of trouble which you will have to encounter, and you will encounter them confidently in proportion as you bear well in mind how the milder forms were vanquished. 2. We have shown you how strong was the faith of David. It is true, that finally he went with no weapons but a stone and a sling: he went, that is, with none of those appliances which seem required, whether for his own defence or for the defeat of Goliath. But, then it is just as true, that he did not determine to go thus unequipped to the field until he had done his best to ascertain that it was not God's will that he should wear a warrior's arms. There seems no reason to suppose that David tried on Saul's armour merely out of compliance with Saul's wish: on the contrary, it appears to have been his intention to have used his armour, and the intention was only given up because, on trial, the armour proved an encumbrance. If ever man might have ventured to say means might be neglected, the result is ordained, and will be brought round without any of the common instrumentality, David might have been warranted in refusing the armour without trying it on. But this is just what David did not do: he proceeded on the principle that no expectation of a miracle should make us slack in the employment of means; but that so long as means are within reach, we are bound to employ them, though it may not be through their use that God will finally work. And can you fail to see how David thus became a great example to ourselves? I know not in what precise way God may design to effect the conversion of any one in this assembly, or to give any one victory over some great spiritual adversary; but I know thoroughly what is the business of every one of you, if you look to be converted, or hope to be made victor. There are appointed means through which God is ordinarily pleased to bring round such results: and the readiest mode of frustrating the results is, to take for granted, that means may be neglected. These means are prayer, the study of the Bible, and the ordinances of public worship. That you can show me that the Goliath is often finally slain by stones taken out of the brook, and not by any of the more massive weapons is nothing against our argument; for our argument is, that, though slain at last by the pebble, the slayer has commonly first put on the armour; in short, that no man has a right to have recourse to the stone and the sling until he have first made trial of the coat of mail and the sword. We are quite prepared, we say, for occasionally finding, that a casual remark in conversation, a text quoted, or a passing observation while engaged in his ordinary occupation, will effect what the public ministrations have failed to effect—penetrate the heart, and overthrow the strongholds of pride and unbelief: and here Goliath falls before the pebble, and not before the armour of the thoroughly equipped warrior. But, nevertheless, the man of whom we speak, had recourse to the armoury before he had recourse to the brook; and, probably, had he refused to appeal to the armoury, that penetrating stone would never have been drawn from the brook; at all events, no man can have a right to be looking for miracle who is not diligent in the employment of means: man is to be trying on the armour, though God may at last use the pebble. And there is one particular case to which we would apply these more general remarks. I know not a more difficult or delicate undertaking, than that of defending the cause of God and of truth against some champion of infidelity and error. It is probably better to keep silence than to throw one's self into discussion, and have the worst of the argument. And you are not to feel sure, that because you have undoubted truth on your side, you will conquer in the struggle: the proof by which truth may be substantiated is quite different from the truth itself; just as is the guilt of a prisoner from the evidence which will make a jury determine on his conviction. Goliath is not always to be slain with a pebble, though he defy the armies of the living God to which his opponent belongs. And the question is, whether the man who has really nothing but the sling and the pebble should be forward in every company where a Philistine may be, in accepting his challenge. There are cases indeed in which the unlettered believer is distinctly called on to engage

with the giant, and whenever such case arises, we have no fear but that God will strengthen him for the fight. If called like David, like David he will be protected. But the evil generally is, that our youthful champions, eager, however unprepared, to throw themselves into argument, fancy themselves imitating David, because he went forth with nothing but a sling and a stone; but they forget that he first tried to put on the armour of Saul. We want them to imitate David in each successive particular. To complete the destruction of Goliath, David ran and seized the giant's sword, and with that sword he cut off his head. And how was Satan finally vanquished, and, as it were, decapitated by Christ, if not with his own sword? Was not death emphatically the sword of the devil, seeing that he is expressly said to have had "the power of death," and that it was through death that he had laid waste successive generations, and swept them into his own place of torment? And, remember ye not how it is declared that Christ died "that through death he might destroy him that had the power over death, that is, the devil?" It was by dying that he slew the devil; he vanquished him by taking death for his weapon. And what was this but David using Goliath's sword to cut off Goliath's head? It may therefore well be called a parable of redemption, which is written in the incidents of the chapter before us. These incidents may have furnished a significative lesson to David, just as did those of the offering up of Isaac to Abraham. And thus do we draw from our subject a lesson for the nation. But let us not overlook that which belongs to the individual. The paw of the lion, the paw of the bear, the uncircumcised Philistine, in every case, needs strength. God alone can give the strength—God alone can give victory in every struggle with corruption, and in the final struggle with death. But if you will fight as followers of Christ, regarding him as the Captain of your salvation, and depending simply on the aids of His Spirit, you shall be made more than conquerors; the giants one after the other shall fall before you, and the last enemy shall do the work of a friend in consigning you to glory and honour and immortality. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

Ver. 41. And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David.—
Combat and consequences:—The inward preparation through outward trial may have been hidden from David. We are not permitted to know the why of many an hour of discipline; God lets when wait on why! David urges his suit; he wishes to go. Every warrior called of God has weapons for use that no Saul can give. Dependence alone upon God gives wonderful independence of men. Behind the outer world record, there is always the inner and spiritual. From the outward view, Abraham leaving country and kindred was only in consonance with the restlessness of a nomadic life. From the inward we know it was the call of God. David was being trained for triumph, trained for his future as king. This panel is the closing one in the story of his shepherd days. The old peaceful, songful, careless days end. They end with a conflict and a victory. Do not the epochs of our lives close with combat? We close the days of our boyhood really when we enter our first contest, when we close with some temptation that never came as a temptation in the old days. The doors are open, the steps are hidden. He who would enter must climb. I. **THE APPARENT INEQUALITY OF THE COMBATANTS.** To the eye of sense the conflict between the Church of God and that armed Goliath of the world appears as if it could only end in the Church's defeat! It does really sound like presumption and folly to sing of victory when we present only ruddy and unarmoured Davids. There is a quantity the world's eye never sees!—chariots whose wheels, horses whose hoofs move noiselessly, such as Elisha's servant once saw. There is a quality the world knows not, and has no more power to recognise than had Herod to recognise the kingliness of purity, when Christ stood before him. II. **THE REAL INEQUALITY OF THE COMBATANTS.** "Things are not what they seem." There is more than eye can see. David tells him of dependence upon Divine power (ver. 46). How calm one can be when dependent wholly and alone on the Lord! How strangely at variance with appearances a man's words may then be! "This day." So Elijah could stand before Ahab, or the priests of Baal at Carmel, or Bunyan before the judges at Bedford. Do not mistake presumption for dependence; they differ eternally. Dependence upon God never opposes commonsense, but sanctifies it. David's heart is resting in his God, his head and hand fulfilling the Divine command. How often at fault is the judgment of sense! Yet this old-world scene occurs every day. We may still see aggregations of mere material strength—"walking

mountains of brass," to quote Matthew Henry. It is no dream, no fancy, to remind you that before the enthusiasm of faith, and by Divine direction, these shall fall. The Church has yet to learn the deep meaning of the words, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual." Who can successfully cope with evil licensed by Government, the fearful monopolies of vice, prostitution under British rule in India, gambling beneath the very eye of the legislative assembly? This victory was fraught with momentous consequences for David. From that moment he became acquainted with life in quite another aspect than that of his Bethlehem home. As Dr. MacLaren beautifully says, "He began to learn its hate and effort, hollow fame, whispering calumnies, and political intrigues." Until then he had not heard the hollow tone of courtiers nor the frenzied laugh of disappointment. The door of victory was for David, as it is for all God's warriors, the door of trial. It was needful for David to know sorrow, to become acquainted with grief. He must learn the meaning of hate and deceit; not to practise, but avoid; must come into touch with natures he will afterwards have to rule. He must gain a mastery over himself. The metal must be annealed. (*H. E. Stone.*) *David and Goliath*:—Saul's simple blessing, "Go, and the Lord shall be with thee," ought to have been allowed to stand as the veteran's farewell charge to the new recruit. It would have been as sufficient as the mother's parting kiss and "God bless you" when her boy leaves his home of poverty to make his way in the great city with all his goods tied up in a handkerchief and his Bible in his pocket. When we have done a good thing, especially a spiritual one, it is difficult to be persuaded to leave the single impression without some private brand of our own. Hunters use in the pursuit of wild game an expanding bullet, which enlarges as it enters the side of its victim. When one has uttered a gracious truth it can often be left to itself to work its way to the heart. Saul could not quite keep his hands off the new enterprise. The latent jealousy of the old commander would rise at any scheme conducted entirely by an underling. The veteran could not be content to see the stripling champion of the Lord's cause without some of the traditional military costume. We remark as in contrast to this:—I. THE WISDOM OF FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT'S SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE METHOD OF A WORK OF FAITH. "And Saul clad David with his apparel, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head, and he clad him with a coat of mail." For the moment Saul was allowed to array David in the heavy war suit of the day. A sense of the ridiculous may have come first to the relief of the lad. He was not so large a man as the king, and the clanking plates of metal would impede the free movement of the volunteer. There are times when an appreciation of the humorous elements of a situation will prevent serious folly. If good people who overwork prophecy on every possible occasion had only a slight intuition of the appearance of their performances, they would be aware that something must be wrong in their outfit. Scripture does not lend itself to grotesque interpretations without exacting penalties from its manipulators. There are fads of false science which are so silly that they cannot be meant to be incorporated into the great body of the world's dignified truth. The boy in his grandfather's coat is not counted a serious actor on the stage of life. But beyond this feeling of unfitness there was this reason, "I have not proved them." The youth felt the seriousness of the crisis, notwithstanding his bravery. He knew the long practice required to get an unerring aim with the sling. Beyond all these motives which influenced David would be the assurance that God, who gave him a work to do, would show the method of it. The Lord who called to the bold undertaking would give the plan. II. THE RANGE OF GIFTS WHICH THE SPIRIT CAN USE AND BLESS IN AN ENTERPRISE OF FAITH. "And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even his scrip; and his sling was in his hand." This was not the first experience of the Lord's consecration of the youth's gifts. "Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear." The Lord often makes use of men's gifts to get them to a position of vantage from which they can do more efficient service. Sir Hope Grant when a youth was selected because of his skill in playing the flute for the staff of Lord Saltoun, who was going out to take command of the British forces in China. The long voyage of months around the Cape of Good Hope to their destination was thus to be made more tolerable for the officers. Grant soon became the foremost Christian in the English army in the East and one of its most successful generals. David's reputation for music got him a place at the court of Saul, and perhaps the story of

his rugged valour among the shepherds secured him a hearing as a champion of Israel. Guizot's gifts as a diplomat made him necessary to his Catholic sovereigns and gave him a position from which he could exert a beneficent influence for an oppressed church in France. John Wycliffe's parliamentary skill and zeal for liberty made him an important ally of the House of Lancaster and gained him the protection which he needed to spread the doctrines of the Gospel. Many accomplishments of the Christian may be of service in gaining an entrance to doors and hearts closed to direct religious appeal. Dr. Asa Gray, the botanist, records of his long and singularly successful career as a Christian and a man of science that when he was ready for any forward movement he almost always found that things were prepared for him. Let one have himself in training for a useful life and he will find a place and opportunity awaiting the employment of his gifts. III. A CONSECRATED YOUTH EARLY BEGINS TO BEAR HIS COUNTRY'S BURDENS AS A WORK OF FAITH. "But I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied." David belongs to a legion of those out of every nation who have consecrated their youth to their country's freedom and to God. They are a nobler band than Sons of the Revolution. They have been the sires of States. "The war song that has made all Germans merge their local differences in one great purpose—the common fatherland—that united Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers in 1870, and the Imperial Crown to the House of Hohenzollern—that song is 'Die Wacht am Rhein.'" It was written at the age of twenty-one by a poor German roused against the French aggressions upon his native land. Not all such heroic souls have been permitted to take up arms. Their stanzas, their speeches, their deeds of mercy have made them members of this patriotic and Christian fraternity. Every nation has contributed its quota for this ancient peerage to which David belonged. It is older than all orders, chapters, and lodges. The people who are to be preserved in their inheritance and liberties must still be able to call forth the devotion of these volunteer champions of law, institutions, faith, and native land. (*W. R. Campbell.*)

Ver. 45. **I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts.**—*The conflict and the conquest of faith*:—God is not unmindful of any of His anointed ones: He has a work for all His people to do. It was a great work to which David was called; there were before him great conflicts, and great triumphs, and therefore he required great faith. But God does not send any of His people to a warfare at their own charges. I. THE CONFLICT OF FAITH. Before David proceeded to the conquest, he had to encounter many obstacles from without; while, there is not the least doubt, he was exercised by many trials within. 1. In the first place he was tried by the gigantic stature and martial appearance of his adversary, whilst he was a stripling, and a stripling unarmed. It is in vain to suppose that David was divested of human feeling: however strong in faith a man may be, still he is but man, and has about him all the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature. 2. He was exercised, also, by the rebukes of his brethren. 3. And after this, he was discouraged by Saul himself. There seems to have been here some misgiving of mind on the part of David; at all events he seems to enter into the views of Saul, and thinks it would be better to be armed to meet an armed champion. And, in the midst of all this, the devil would be no unconcerned spectator of the transaction: there is not a question but that David would be inwardly exercised, and agitated, perhaps by the very same thoughts which he has often put into the hearts of God's people, and had, before this, put into the heart of Saul; and he might have argued, "Is it not presumption in me, a stripling, to meet a giant? Is it not rashness?" And might he not consider the taunt of his brother, and the remonstrance of Saul, to be to him the voice of God? Which things are an allegory; for herein we see the camp of the living God, the Church of Christ assailed by Apollyon the destroyer. I am now, then, to call your attention to his mode of attack. You will find it is, in the first place, by open assault, and, secondly, by sudden and hidden device. (1.) It is, in the first place, by open assault. It is the method which is adopted by the great deceiver and accuser of the brethren. He tries and harasses the people of God in the early stages of their experience by open assault, by bringing against them open railing accusations, and thereby attacks their faith. (2.) But if faith holds out then he will raise the siege for a season; he will appear to retire, and he will assail your faith in another direction; and

that will be by subtle, wily, hidden device. Transforming himself into an angel of light, he will try you as he did David, by your friends—by false friends, and by true friends. (3.) The people of God are further tried through the instrumentality of those who are true brethren. Satan, you will remember, dared to try the great Head of the Church by one of His Apostles. Peter said unto Him, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." Our Lord saw the spirit of Satan working in the mind of His Apostle, and said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." (4.) But if faith remains inflexibly firm against this attack, then the devil tries the children of God by ungodly people. It may be by those of their own household—by father, or mother, or those who are in power and authority. Thus it is that the serpent winds his wily folds round the heart of the people of God, even unto hesitation. Here is the struggle. They say, "May I not make this little surrender? May I not give up this little thing but for once? Will not the peculiar delicacy, or the peculiar difficulty, of my case extenuate the concession? Then put on the armour and go forth." Yes, Satan brings the people of God to this pass; and they have put the armour on, and they have gone forth in it. But it would not fit the gracious soul; he cannot fight in this armour, he has never been accustomed to such weapons as these. And then faith revives. What! shall I give up my leaning on the everlasting arm of the Most High, to lean on an arm of flesh? What! shall I lose all my peace, and my comfort, and the happiness of my soul in God, for the smiles of men and the favour of the world? II. THE CONQUEST OF FAITH IN THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION. There are two things that are notable in the exploits of David: the one was the strength of his confidence—the other, the weapons of his warfare. The one, you know, was God: "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied: " his weapons were the sling and the stone. Not that David was without armour: every soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ has armour on; and so had David; but it was not Saul's armour, not man's armour. God equips all His believing people for their warfare, as soon as He inclines them into His service: He leads them into His armoury. Thus harnessed, David went forth to meet the uncircumcised Philistine. Alas, for the apathy of the day in which we live! Where is the man that will even dare to risk his name, or his reputation, or his interest? Scarcely one will be found willing to hazard his ease or his credit to vindicate the honour of the God who has bought him with His blood. Not so David. He, full of faith, went out, because he heard the name of his God dishonoured, and his Israel reproached. "What! against a giant, and a champion, in arms!" "No matter; he has blasphemed the name of my God, and in the strength of that God will I go out and meet him, yea, unarmed as I am." Thus went David forth. So it is when the Christian champion, the soldier of Jesus Christ is tried, and he goes forth to fight; he takes up his sling. By faith he takes a well-directed aim, and by prayer and supplication he slings the fatal bolt, and wounds his enemy in the head. (*T. J. Holloway, D.D.*) *Faith and force*:—The duel of David and Goliath is but one chapter in the history of faith and force in conflict. Brute force here appears with sword and shield, helmet and spear; faith comes with the simple sling and stone, but with God's strength and in His name. Force looks down contemptuously on faith, and holds itself proud and arrogant. Faith is submissive and humble, but full of hope and courage. It matters not what form force takes—that of numbers, of wealth, of social prestige, of intellect, of educational or of political superiority; if it arrays itself against simple faith in God, the duel of David and Goliath is again repeated. Let us notice certain central facts. 1. This is a faith that is in action. Nothing is said of prayer, though David may have spent the whole night in prayer before the fight. His is a faith that acts, rather than begs. There are times when even prayer is out of place. God once said to Moses, "Why criest thou unto Me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward." It was a time for marching. The spirit of prayer may be continued, though the form be suspended. Faith here stands alone in the person of David. A grain of mustard-seed rather than a can of dynamite is the chosen type of Divine working. A single soul like Luther is filled with God's thought and power, while the community is not in sympathy with that thought. *Vox populi* is by no means *Vox Dei*. The voice of the people killed Jesus Christ, it killed Socrates, it killed the martyrs. It is the minority, often, that more truly represents the right and the truth. 2. Faith controls forces or forces will control faith. There was a young man who once was sent out by our missionary board reluctantly, for they doubted his efficiency; but in a single year

he led ten thousand to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. John Clough was a surveyor, and he preached to companies of men under him on one verse, "God so loved the world," etc., till 15,000 were reached and two-thirds of them accepted Christianity. This was in connection with a mission-field so apparently unfruitful that it was thought hardly worth continuing. He dedicated his surveying talent to Christ. Where is your confidence—in faith or forces? Which? Michael Angelo worked so long on ceilings and on things overhead that it is said he had formed the habit of looking upward as he walked the street or field. The true believer is "looking unto Jesus." He brings all he has to Him. "My faith looks up to Thee," in his language. 3. Faith is simple and unchanging. It can overcome one difficulty or form of opposition as easily as it can another. Not so in the play of material forces. David subdued the bear in a different way from that employed with the lion, and Goliath was met with still different methods of physical action; but the training in faith which the son of Jesse had received enabled him to meet and overcome all things through God's power. But petty, pestering trials are sometimes harder to meet than great ones. A Turkish army once forced their way into a German city, but were driven back by swarms of bees, whose sting was harder to meet than the blows of a battering-ram. It may require less faith to meet some great Goliath of difficulty than to preserve one's Christian equanimity during a single night's siege of mosquitoes in a New Jersey hotel. The house-keeper loses her temper at home amid dust and din, and the merchant amid the buzzing annoyances of the store. For great ills and small ones alike, faith in God's promised presence and strength will alone avail. 4. Faith is protected, though its power seem vain; and force alone is vain, though it may seem protected. Bystanders at this duel doubtless said: "Goliath is safe, and David is in danger." But the giant died, and the boy returned in triumph. The three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace were in the safest place in all Persia. Jerome of Prague was unharmed trusting in God. After he confided in the sovereign's promised protection he was betrayed and burned at the stake. Finally, temporary defeat is to the believer the highest victory. He may be "killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter," but none of these things need to move him. None of them can separate him from the love of Christ. (A. C. Dixon, D.D.) *The conquest of faith*:—The prosperity of David after his first elevation from private life was but of brief continuance, probably extending only to a few months. In that little space, however, what an immensity of evil was he called to witness, and witness, we must suppose, with disgust; an infatuated king, abandoned to evil and the malice of demons, because of his unfaithfulness; men of studied deceitfulness and falsehood; luxury, flattery, levity, and sordid worldliness; all forming the members and elements of the life into which he was so suddenly introduced. All that David witnessed of the world while with Saul, and felt from his ingratitude, must, in due course, have undeceived him as to the human character, were he predisposed to view it with any mistaken esteem or confidence; and his sudden removal from court must have sent him with fresh alacrity to his peaceful occupation as a shepherd, in the which he might renew communion with God, pour out his soul at large, and receive additional strength for future emergencies. You perceive how wisely this retirement was ordained for David. He is to play the champion of Israel against terrific odds; his spiritual courage, his holy daring, then, must be nourished for the contest, not in the effeminacy and corrupt atmosphere of a court, but with God in sacred communion. I. DAVID'S PREPARATORY DISCIPLINE. During his retirement, David was receiving that nurture or Divine preparation which should fit him for great achievements, especially for the overthrow of the adversaries of Israel. Sick of the world, he had to live entirely with God, and reft of every solace but His presence, he had, in his lonely condition, to learn the way of Providence, and the supernatural power which can be communicated through faith. II. DAVID'S PREPARATORY DISCIPLINE IS CONCLUDED, AND HE IS NOW CALLED TO THE FIELD AS THE LORD'S CHAMPION. David is a stranger to the science of war, knows nothing of the dexterity which long experience alone can give in the use of martial implements, and comes to the field ignorant of all that belongs to the deadly encounter. Was not this hardihood mere madness? Madness undoubtedly, were it not for certain considerations, which prove his valour to have been most rational. Look, now, upon his preparation for the conflict. There was settled within his soul a deep and holy confidence in the existence and absolute rule of the Divine Being. Further, he had been before in perils, perils in which there were as fearful odds against his life as in the approaching encounter. Lastly, he was assured of

God's interposition. His cause was a most righteous one generally; he was a citizen of a holy state, his adversary was an idolator, and the champion of idolators; and, in particular, having insulted the God of truth, David felt assured that God would vindicate His own cause, and give the victory into his hands against the blasphemer. And so it came to pass, the adversary of Israel fell. There is no discharge in this war; you must fall or conquer, and the struggle is for eternity itself. Go out, then, boldly, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, in the name, and faith, and experienced aid of Jesus Christ; and while it is said by one victor, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," and by another, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith," he himself who triumphed over all the powers of hell upon the cross, will renew in you his victory. Go out in faith, and conquer. We know that the Reformation was a blessed deliverance, and that the encounter which won for us this deliverance, lay between one man, a solitary monk, who had found the truth in sacred Scriptures, and the whole host of superstition. You remember the weakness and timidity of the man at first, ere his views of truth were perfected; his consent to lay down opposition to the Pope, provided that some adequate reform in the Roman Church should be effected. You remember how he replied to the discouraging taunt, "Luther, the whole world is against you"—"Then Luther is against the world!" how he prospered, on principle, on truth, and with the truth, of justification by faith only, inflicted defeat on superstition, and won for us the liberty of the Gospel. (C. M. Fleury, A.M.) *An overcoming faith*:—It is impossible to read the above chapter without being more or less impressed by the simple trust of the shepherd youth in his God. It was intensely real: to him God was "a very present help in the time of trouble;" and it is difficult to say which was the stronger, his jealousy for the honour of the God of Israel, or his confidence in His ability to save. Let us notice a few of the features that characterised the faith of this young son of Jesse. I. IT WAS A FAITH IN THE LIVING GOD. We find these words, "the living God," many times in the Old Testament Scriptures. Joshua, referring to the sure destruction of his enemies, speaks thus: "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is amongst you" (Joshua iii. 10). Jeremiah writes: "The Lord is the true God; He is the living God, and an everlasting King" (Jer. x. 10). "We trust in the living God," were Paul's words of encouragement to Timothy; whilst David sang with gladness: "The Lord liveth: blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Surely this shepherd lad had gripped the truth when, in the midst of the trembling army of Israel, he cried out of a full heart, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" II. IT WAS A FAITH THAT WAS TRIED. "Eliab's anger was kindled against David." The people, too, seemed to have caught the spirit of Eliab, for they answered him "after the former manner." If we would work the works of God, we shall surely have to encounter our Eliabs. May we meet them in the quiet, firm spirit of this son of Jesse. III. IT WAS A FAITH STRENGTHENED BY PAST EXPERIENCE. IV. IT WAS A FAITH THAT WORKED BY MEANS. V. IT WAS A FAITH THAT NEVER WAVERED. VI. IT WAS A FAITH THAT TRIUMPHED GLORIOUSLY. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." (Alfred Lambert.) *The faith of God's elect*:—Three figures stand out sharply defined on that memorable day. First, the Philistine champion. Second, Saul. Third, David. He was but a youth, and ruddy, and withal of a fair countenance. No sword was in his hand; he carried a staff, probably his shepherd's crook. But he was in possession of a mystic spiritual power, which the mere spectator might have guessed, but which he might have found it difficult to define. The living God was a reality to him. At least, he had no doubt that the Lord would vindicate His glorious name, and deliver into his hands this uncircumcised Philistine. Let us study the origin and temper of this heroic faith. I. IT HAD BEEN BORN IN SECRET, AND NURSED IN SOLITUDE. This is the unfailing secret. There is no short cut to the life of faith, which is the all-vital condition of a holy and victorious life. We must have periods of lonely meditation and fellowship with God. II. IT HAD BEEN EXERCISED IN LONELY CONFLICT. What we are in solitude we shall be in public. Do not for a moment suppose, O self-indulgent disciple, that the stimulus of a great occasion will dower thee with a heroism of which thou betrayest no trace in secret hours. The crisis will only reveal the true quality and temper of the soul. III. IT STOOD THE TEST OF DAILY LIFE. There are some who appear to think that the loftiest attainments of the spiritual life are incompatible with the grind of daily toil and the friction of the home. "Emancipate us from these," they cry, "give us nothing to do, except to nurse our souls to

noble deeds; deliver us from the obligations of family ties, and we will fight for those poor souls who are engrossed with the cares and ties of the ordinary and commonplace." We must not forsake the training-ground till we have learnt all the lessons God has designed it to teach, and have heard His summons. IV. IT BORE MEELY MISCONSTRUCTION AND REBUKE. Eliab had no patience with the words and bearing of his young brother. A marvellous exhibition was given that day in the valley of Elah that those who are gentlest under provocation are strongest in the fight, and that meekness is really an attribute of might. V. IT WITHSTOOD THE REASONINGS OF THE FLESH. Saul was very eager for David to adopt his armour, though he dared not don it himself. He was taken with the boy's ingenuous earnestness, but advised him to adopt the means. "Don't be rash; don't expect a miracle to be wrought. By all means trust God, and go; but be wise. We ought to adopt ordinary precautions." It was a critical hour. But an unseen hand withdrew David from the meshes of temptation. It was not now Saul's armour and the Lord, but the Lord alone; and he was able, without hesitation, to accost the giant with the words, "The Lord saveth not with sword and spear." His faith had been put to the severest tests and was approved. Being more precious than silver or gold, it had been exposed to the most searching ordeal; but the furnace of trial had shown it to be of heavenly temper. Now let Goliath do his worst; he shall know that there is a God in Israel. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The victory of unarmed faith*:—The story is, for all time, the example of the victory of unarmed faith over the world's utmost might. It is in little the history of the church and the type of all battles for God. It is a pattern for the young especially. The youthful athlete leaps into the arena, and overcomes, not because of his own strength, but because he trusts in God. I. NOTE THE GLOWING YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASM WHICH DARES THE CONFLICT. He who trusts in God should be as a pillar of fire, burning bright in the darkness of terror, and making a rallying point for weaker hearts. When panic has seized others, the Christian soul has the more reason for courage. David conquered the temptation to share in the general cowardice before he conquered Goliath, and perhaps the former fight was the worse of the two. While David is the embodiment of the courage of faith, Saul is that of worldly wisdom and calculating prudence. David's eager story of his fights with wild beasts is meant both to answer Saul's objection on his own ground, by showing him that, youth as the speaker was, he had proved his power, and still more to supply the lacking element in the calculation. As Thomas Fuller says, "He made an experimental syllogism, and from most practical premises (major a lion, minor a bear) inferred the direct conclusion that God would give him victory over Goliath." Faith has the right thus to argue from the past to the future, because it draws from God, whose resources and patience are equally inexhaustible. II. THE EQUIPMENT OF FAITH. Saul meant to honour as well as to secure David by dressing him in his own royal attire, and by encumbering him by the help of sword and helmet. And David was willing to be so fitted out, for it is no part of the courage of faith to disdain any outward helps. But he soon found that he could not move freely in the unaccustomed armour, and flings it off, like a wise man. His motive was partly common sense, which told him not to choose weapons that his antagonist could handle better than he; and partly reliance on God, which told him that he was safer with nothing on but his long shepherd's dress and his sling in his hand. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty. Faith unarmed is armed with more than triple steel, and a sling in its hand is more fatal than a sword. Sometimes in kindness and sometimes in malice the world tempts us to fight evil with its own weapons, and to take the unfamiliar armour. The church as a whole and individual Christians have often been hampered, and all but smothered, in Saul's grand clothes. The more simply we keep ourselves to the simple methods which the word of God enjoins and to the simple weapons which ought to be the easiest for a Christian, the more likely shall we be to conquer. III. NOTE FAITH'S ANTICIPATION OF VICTORY. The dialogue before the battle has many parallels in classical times and among savage peoples. Goliath's bluster is meant by him for contempt of David and truculent self-confidence. Its coarseness is characteristic—he will make his boyish antagonist food for vultures and jackals. It is exactly what a bully would say. David's answer throbs with buoyant confidence, and stands as a stimulating example of the temper in which God's soldiers should go out to every fight, no matter against what odds. The great name on which David's faith rested, "the Lord of hosts," appears to have sprung into use in this epoch, and to have been one precious fruit of its frequent

wars. Conflict is blessed if it teaches the knowledge of the unseen Commander who marshals not only men, but all the forces of the universe and the armies of heaven, for the defence of his servants and the victory of His own cause. The fulness of the Divine name is learned by degrees, as our needs impress the various aspects of his character; and the revelation contained in this appellation is the gift of that fierce and stormy time, a possession forever. He who defies the armies of Israel has to reckon with the Lord of these armies. IV. Observe THE CONTRAST IN VERSE 48 BETWEEN THE SLOW MOVEMENTS OF THE HEAVY-ARMED PHILISTINE AND THE QUICK RUN OF THE SHEPHERD, whose "feet were as hind's feet" (Psa. 18: 33.) Agility and confident alacrity were both expressed. His feet were shod with the preparedness of faith. The vulnerable heel of Achilles and the unarmed forehead of Goliath illustrate the truth, ever forgotten and needing to be repeated, that, after all precautions, some spot is bare, and that "there is no armour against fate." (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Victory through the Name*:—I. THE TALISMAN OF VICTORY. "The name of the Lord of Hosts." Throughout the Scriptures, a name is not simply, as with us, a label; it is a revelation of character. The names which Adam gave the animals that were brought to him were founded on characteristics which struck his notice. And the names which the Second Adam gave to the apostles either expressed qualities which lay deep within them, and which He intended to evolve, or unfolded some great purpose for which they were being fitted. Thus the Name of God, as used so frequently by the heroes and saints of sacred history, stands for those Divine attributes and qualities which combine to make Him what He is. In the history of the early Church the Name was a kind of summary of all that Jesus had revealed of the nature and the heart of God. "For the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." The special quality that David extracted from the bundle of qualities represented by the Divine Name of God is indicated in the words, "the Lord of Hosts." That does not mean only that God was Captain of the embattled hosts of Israel; that idea was expressed in the words that followed, "The God of the armies of Israel." But there was probably something of this sort in David's thought. To come in the Name of the Lord of Hosts did not simply mean that David understood Jehovah to be all this; but implied his own identification by faith with all that was comprehended in this sacred Name. An Englishman in a foreign land occupies a very different tone, according to whether he assumes a private capacity as an ordinary traveller, or acts as representative and ambassador of his country. In the former case he speaks in his own name, and receives what respect and obedience it can obtain; in the latter he is conscious of being identified with all that is associated with the term Great Britain. For a man to speak in the name of England means that England speaks through his lips; that the might of England is ready to enforce his demands; and that every sort of power which England wields is pledged to avenge any affront or indignity to which he may be exposed. Thus, when Jesus bids us ask what we will in His Name, He means not that we should simply use that Name as an incantation or formula, but that we should be so one with Him in His interests, purposes, and aims, that it should be as though He were Himself approaching the Father with the petitions we bear. There is much for us to learn concerning this close identification with God before we shall be able to say with David, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts." II. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE ARE WARRANTED IN USING THE NAME. 1. When we are pure in our motives. There was no doubt as to the motive which prompted David to this conflict. His one ambition was to take away the reproach from Israel, and to let all the earth know that there was a God in Israel. We must be wary here. It is so easy to confuse issues which are wide asunder as the poles, and to suppose that we are contending for the glory of God, when we are really combating for our church, our cause, our prejudices, or opinions. To fall into this sin, though unconsciously, is to forfeit the right to use His sacred Name. 2. When we are willing to allow God to occupy His right place. David said repeatedly that the whole matter was God's. His skill must direct us; His might empower us; His uplifted hands bring us victory. 3. When we take no counsel with the flesh. It must have been a hard thing for a youth to oppose his opinion to Saul's, especially when the king was so solicitous for his welfare. He could not have served two masters so utterly antagonistic. To have yielded to Saul would have put him beyond the fire-ring of the Divine environment. How perpetually does Satan breathe into our ears the soft words that Peter whispered to his Master, when He began to speak about the cross. "Spare Thyself: that shall not come unto Thee." There is so

much talk about the legitimacy of means, that no room is left on which the Almighty can act. III. THE BEARING OF THOSE WHO USE THE NAME. 1. They are willing to stand alone. The lad asked no comradeship in the fight. There was no running to and fro to secure a second. 2. They are deliberate. He was free from the nervous trepidation which so often unfits us to play our part in some great scene. Our heart will throb so quickly, our movements become so fitful and unsteady. He did not go by haste or flight, because the Lord went before him, and the Holy One of Israel was his reward. 3. They are fearless. When the moment came for the conflict, David did not hesitate. 4. They are more than conquerors. The weakest man who knows God is strong to do exploits. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *A true spirit, the pledge of victory in the battle of life*:—These two men give us a picture of the forms of good and evil. Evil in our world is like Goliath: of gigantic stature, immense energy, and imposing aspect. It is a Colossus. Good in our world is like David in appearance: small, weak, and insignificant; possessing nothing to which the world attaches the idea of strength or glory. So it appeared in Christ: "He was as a root out of a dry ground." 2. These two men give us a picture of the spirit of good and evil. The spirit of evil, like that of Goliath, is proud, contemptuous, malignant. The spirit of good, like that of David, is that of humble trust and dependence upon God. 3. These two men give us a picture of the weapons of good and evil. Evil, like Goliath, has many and powerful weapons to fight its battles. Like Goliath, it is full-armed. Armies and navies are on its side. The weapons of good are of the simplest kind: the sling and stone of David would symbolise them. "The weapons of our warfare," &c. 4. These two men give us a picture of the ultimate destinies of good and evil. But the subject on which at present we would fasten attention is, A true spirit the pledge of victory in the battle of life. Life is a battle. Physical life is a battle against danger and disease; intellectual life is a battle against ignorance and error; moral life is a battle against selfishness and wrong. He who has not felt life to be a battle, has not woken up as yet to the reality of existence. Now, a true spirit alone will make us victorious in this battle. I. THAT A TRUE SPIRIT IS SUPERIOR TO THE GREATEST MATERIAL STRENGTH OF OUR FOES. What was the cause of the victory? It was to be found in the spirit that animated the breast of David—the spirit of dependence upon God. II. A TRUE SPIRIT IS SUPERIOR TO THE GREATEST SOCIAL PRESTIGE OF OUR FOES. Goliath had obtained great fame as a warrior. Prestige is a wonderful thing—a mighty power. Give a man or an institution a prestige, and however feeble and worthless it may be, people will be disposed to yield to its influence. Many institutions, governments, books, live not on the ground of their merits; but because of the prestige they have obtained. But the true spirit will overcome this. Goliath, with all his prestige, fell. Whatever may be the prestige of evil, the true spirit will overcome it. Idolatry, war, &c., have prestige, but they shall fall. III. A TRUE SPIRIT IS SUPERIOR TO THE COMPLETEST ACCOUTREMENTS OF OUR FOES. Huge evil, in our world, is well-armed—defended by armies, navies, governments, customs, learning, wealth; but a man with the true spirit will overcome it. "This is the victory that overcometh the world," &c. IV. A TRUE SPIRIT IS SUPERIOR TO THE PROUDEST VAUNTINGS OF OUR FOES. But how does this true spirit ensure victory in the battles of life? 1. It enables man to employ the best means. It is fanaticism that makes men regardless of means. Enlightened devotion is ever anxious to select the most fitting. Though it feels that all success is from God, it presumes on no supernatural help. David could stand at a distance from his huge antagonist, could calmly take his aim, and make his calculations. He could hurl the pebble at the vulnerable spot. The whole instrumentality seems well adapted. No miracle was used—for no miracle was wanted. 2. It enables man to use the best means in the best way. (1.) With undaunted courage. (2.) It inspires the possessor with invincible determination. 3. It ensures the aid of God in the best use of the best means. (*Homilist.*) *The source of victory*:—I. THE VICTORY OF THE CHURCH IS MADE CERTAIN: 1. By the promises of God. 2. By the necessary triumph of righteousness over unrighteousness, of truth over error, of love over hate. 3. The glory of God and the establishment of universal and eternal harmony in all the domains of His moral government require it. II. THE SOURCE OF THE VICTORY IS NOT HUMAN, BUT DIVINE. A Divine Leader, Christ, to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. The weapons He employs are spiritual. III. THE SPOILS OF THE VICTORY OURS. (*Homiletic Review.*) *David and Goliath*:—The story is a casket, and the spirit of David is its jewel. Come near, and I will open the lovely casket, and show you its lovelier jewel. I. DAVID

WAS ON GOD'S SIDE. This was a religious war. Goliath fought for Dagon, and cursed David by his gods. David fought for Jehovah. The battle is the Lord's, David said truly. David was careful not so much to have God on his side, as to be on God's side, and do only God's will. Goliath rose before him like a mountain plated with iron and flashing brass: his spear a beam, his voice thunder. At first we pity the stripling as being devoted to certain death. Yet without a quiver, or a moment's delay, he offers himself as the champion of Israel. People speak about the giants you have to fight, but really you, like David, have one giant before you. He is the great adversary, the evil one, the Goliath of hell. Stripling as you are, you must accept his challenge for the duel. If you conquer your Goliath, all his hosts will take to flight. You must not think lightly of this war in the town of Man-soul. Our soldiers in Zululand despised the Zulus, and hundreds of them were slain at Isandula. The remnant still despised their foes, and at Intombi lost their lives for their error. An old Christian, who had hewn his way through the bloodiest scenes at Waterloo, laid his hand upon his breast, and said to me, "I never knew what fighting was till I began to fight with the enemy here. Waterloo was child's play to this." But fear not, for you can be on God's side. Wellington once ordered a captain to take a Spanish fort, before which many of his comrades had fallen. "Give me first a shake of your conquering hand, general," said the captain. They shook hands; the captain dashed forward, took the fort, and declared that the victory was owing to the touch of the general's all-conquering hand. What courage must it then give you to know that God is your shield, and Jesus Christ the Captain of your salvation. II. IN GOD'S STRENGTH DAVID FOUGHT, ELSE HE WAS MAD WHEN HE FACED GOLIATH. God's Spirit gave him his holy courage, suggested his weapons, and guided the stone from the sling to Goliath's crashing temples. Was not David the man after God's own heart because he so frankly owned God in everything? His spirit shines in his beautiful confession, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." No feature in boy or girl, in man or woman, is more beautiful than this gentle and modest spirit, which makes its possessor even as a weaned child; and you shall have a good share of it if you feel that you owe every good thing to God's boundless and unbought mercy. This spirit is no mark of a soft and cowardly nature, for it was the spirit of Israel's champion and Goliath's conqueror. Now the humblest person in the world may cherish the same spirit. Yes, David's lofty spirit may be put into the humblest events. A poor needlewoman in her garret one day told me how she fought the Goliath of poverty. Though lonely and in poor health, she had won the battle. She looked a real heroine as her eyes expanded with exalted feeling, and she thus closed her story, "I may well say with David, 'Blessed be the Lord God, for He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.'" Her needle was perhaps used as nobly as David's conquering sword. III. DAVID THE CONQUEROR. If on God's side you shall win in the end, because God shall win, and all His shall win with Him. Their cause must triumph in His. True, God's good soldiers do not always fare on earth as David did when his stone entered the giant's resounding skull; but in their darkest days faith made them sure of utter and eternal victory. "Where wilt thou remain then?" asked the Emperor Valens of Basil, who had refused to forsake Christ for idols. "Either under heaven, or in heaven," he calmly replied. David, you know, is a type of His Son and Lord, our Saviour. He is our champion, who, in our defence, has slain hell's two Goliaths, Sin and Death. You should love to think of Jesus Christ as having conquered all His and our foes. This grand fact makes the Bible full of holy triumph. Ours is a grand faith, as of men whose foes have been routed. As David triumphed not for himself only but for all Israel, so Christ triumphed for all His people. Our faith should then claim a share in all His triumphs. (*James Wells, M.A.*) *Power and weakness*:—Providence would not permit him to remain long in obscurity. Once more the Philistines assemble their hosts together, and suddenly appear on the frontiers of Judah. Two reasons might have led them to resolve on this enterprise with a degree of confidence. They might have received tidings of Saul's madness; of the recent rupture between Saul and Samuel; and they knew that Samuel was God's prophet; the probability, therefore, was that God had withdrawn from his people the protection with which He had hitherto surrounded them. The condition of the Israelites at this juncture gives us a clue to the real cause of the Church's weakness during many periods in its history, and suggests the reason why it has oftentimes been so desperately attacked by its enemies. When its leaders are men of piety, wisdom, and power, when God's

glory is conspicuous in the midst of it, the Church is unassailable. But when its leaders are afflicted with madness, when the Divine presence takes its departure, then its antagonists are inspired with boldness. David was not to be dissuaded from his purpose by the unjust accusation of his haughty brother. If you do what is right, you must expect opposition; if you strictly follow the dictates of conscience you will not fail to be censured by the world; if you determine to improve in any way the condition of your fellow men there will always be plenty of people to ridicule your efforts. Be, therefore, constantly prepared for it; and let this, instead of depressing your spirits, spur you on to greater determination, to renewed activity, to more strenuous exertions. It is the voice of weakness which says "Give up;" there is a nobler voice which says, "Quit you like men; be strong; never falter when duty calls." David adopted the likeliest means, by far, to ensure success. Let us be men of faith by all means, let us implicitly rely on God's strength, let us acknowledge that without Him we can do nothing; but then we should not rest content with this alone, as if nothing further were required of us. It is our place to employ means, the best means we can think of, the likeliest means to be successful, if we would secure the results which we most desire. We know that this is true in reference to worldly concerns, and we act accordingly. But let us bear in mind that it is not less true in connection with spiritual matters. This narrative brings before us a striking contrast, a contrast between the weakness of self-confidence and the power of faith. Goliath may be taken as the representative of brute force; blustering, showy, confident, but in reality, the very incarnation of weakness. You will always find men who will magnify this kind of force, who will give it the highest praise, who will even worship at its shrine. But let us remember that there is something nobler, higher, and more enduring than this—moral grandeur, compared with which, mere force is a mean, worthless, despicable thing. Goliath may also be taken as the representative of that fierce opposition to God's truth, which has, at all times, been more or less prevalent in the world. Atheism has sometimes put on a bold front, and threatened to sweep away the very name of religion from among men. We might refer to the mad proceedings of France, during the Revolution, as a notorious instance of this. But to what a miserable issue these impious attempts led in the end! And God's truth has its enemies still, even in our own land. Infidelity, indifference, and corruption unite their forces against it. They love to display their strength, they indulge in scornful language, they predict the speedy downfall of true religion. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Self-confidence may manifest itself in the conduct of God's friends, as well as in that of His enemies. But, wherever it is found, it is invariably associated with weakness. Peter was never so confident as when he said to our Lord, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death." But he was never so weak as at that hour. We may take David, on the other hand, as the representative of simple, child-like, earnest faith. Yes, faith is a power—a wonderful power—a power even in this life. These were men in whose vocabulary the word impossible was not found, and consequently they achieved the most extraordinary results. By faith Alexander conquered the world; by faith Hannibal crossed the Alps; by faith Columbus discovered America. These men believed in their ultimate success, and triumphed over every opposition. But it is in the Bible that we have the most remarkable, the most illustrious, the most substantial instances of the power of faith, for here we have faith of the highest kind, faith in God. Our constant prayer, then, should be, "Lord, increase our faith." Our support in trial, our strength against temptation, our ability to perform our duties, depend upon the measure of our faith. (*D. Rowlands, B.A.*) *David and Goliath*:—The three principal divisions of this chapter seem to be, first, the conduct of Goliath; secondly, that of David; and, lastly, the result of the battle, in the destruction of Goliath, and the defeat of the Philistine army. And as the Israelites of old were beset by many implacable enemies, so are the church and household of God now beset by deadly enemies, in unbelieving and wicked men, who, like the Philistines of old, despise the knowledge of God, and whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Faithless thoughts and evil passions are Philistines within the citadel; evil examples and persuasions of ungodly men are as Philistines in open arms or secret ambuscade without; and the unseen enemies are wicked spirits; "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood," says the apostle. 1. Now, observe with what exactness the person and the accoutrements of this champion are noticed, as if to show us that there was nothing wanting to render him a most formidable adversary.

His height, six cubits and a span—about ten or eleven feet; His strength, it must have been prodigious, as may be collected from the weight of the armour in which he was clothed, and from the ponderous size of his spear. He seemed prepared to crush any opponent, and so fortified as to be almost invulnerable. Nothing was probably more remote from his thoughts than being overcome in a contest; and he therefore spoke in those taunting and boasting words. He was thinking of conquest, and confident in his own strength. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." So it was with this unbelieving Goliath. His defiance of the Israelites, and in them of the God of Israel, was the sealing of his own fall. Whenever it so pleases God, He can make the meanest creature an instrument in His hand, can raise the poor out of the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, and set him among the princes of his people. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee: in famine He shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the peril of the sword." Goliath's armour was only of human proof, the weapons of mere human invention: his boasting and defiance came from an unbelieving and self-confident tongue. And Satan, the spiritual Goliath, is his armour impregnable? Are his weapons sure to destroy thee? Is his address to thy fears such as should appal or intimidate thee? Has not a stronger than he already come upon him, and overcome him? Hath he not taken from him all his armour, in which he trusted, and divided his spoils? 2. Let us now turn to the conduct of that remarkable person, who was designed by God to be the conqueror of the boasting and unbelieving Goliath. Now, you may observe that David attributes the conquest which he gained over the furious beasts which attacked his fold, not to his own strength or prowess, but to the Divine help and deliverance: he looks to the same God who had before delivered him, for protection now, and feels confident that he shall be prospered in the approaching struggle. And to whom should the Christian look in the day of trial and difficulty, but to the same almighty and gracious hand which has holden him up ever since he was born? What should he call to mind to encourage him but God's tender mercies and loving-kindnesses, which have been ever of old? And he will find, as David did, that it is "good for him to hold him fast by God, and to put his trust in the Lord God." To one of less courage than David, a courage which nothing but a firm trust in God and the aid of the Spirit of the Lord could have given him, the appearance of this formidable giant, armed at all points, and a warrior from his youth, might well have caused dismay; but David "looked not on his countenance, or the height of his stature," persuaded that God would "deliver him from his strong enemy; that He who can save by many or by few would "break the shield, the sword, and the battle," would make all human strength but weakness. So, in all your trials, of whatever kind they be, do not flatter yourselves in your own strength; do not lean to your own understanding, skill, or power: without God you can do nothing; with Him you may surmount the most appalling dangers. 3. Here I shall close the history of this wonderful event, the result of which was the deliverance of the Israelites from the power of their enemies, and from the fears and apprehensions which had so oppressed them. Let me remind you that our blessed Lord triumphed over the power of Satan, our great spiritual enemy, destroyed his works, and frustrated his malice, by the same aid by which David triumphed over Goliath—he had the arm of God with him; and, "if God be for us, who shall be against us?" And be assured that you have no reason for fear if you hold you fast by God. Remember how man's natural fears are apt to magnify difficulties and dangers. There is a lion in the way. Had David shrunk back at the sight of Goliath, where would have been his crown of rejoicing? If the Christian looks back with fear, what will be his reward? Set thy face as a flint, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble. (*Thomas Loveday, B.D.*) *David and Goliath*:—1. In one respect every Christian resembles David: he has been anointed by the Holy Ghost for an especial purpose: called and selected from the world to be "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." As our condition and duties are spiritual, so our enemies are spiritual. No considerate person will deny that these opponents are as far more powerful than our best unassisted resolutions as Goliath was than David. There is, therefore, without any forced or fanciful parallel, this decided resemblance between the cases of David and ourselves; both are endowed with the strength of the same Spirit: both are exposed to very unequal enemies. The first prevailed. 2. Can we learn, from his example, how we may prevail also? After David had received an extraordinary

effusion of the Holy Ghost, and was solemnly appointed to the highest dignity to which any of his countrymen could aspire, we do not find that he assumed that superiority to his brethren and even to his father, to which he was most undoubtedly entitled; he went back to his pastoral occupation, and remained in the discharge of his duties as a respectful son and an affectionate brother. This conduct of David will astonish none who understand the real spirit of the Gospel. If there be one here who values himself on his spiritual acquirements, and his growth in grace; who supposes himself to have been arbitrarily selected by God, for no other purpose, it appears, than to be saved without exertion; who trusts in himself that he is righteous and despises others; let him be intreated to review the conduct of a character manifestly and confessedly actuated by an extraordinary portion of God's Holy Spirit, and let him compare this conduct with his own. Living in strictness, after God's own heart, David, as he did not seek power or grandeur, even when the Kingdom of Israel was conferred on him by the most unquestionable title, so neither did he court difficulty or danger. His eldest brothers had gone to win glory in the cause of their God and their country; but he, God's chosen servant and his country's anointed king, lingered in the fields, inactive and obscure. It is therefore the duty of the Christian not ambitiously to throw himself in the way of temptation in order to exhibit his zeal for his profession, or his confidence in victory. This is becoming a tempter himself, and acting in open violation of a positive command, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Had David, contrary to his father's will, rushed to the battle and accepted the challenge of the Philistine champion, it is most probable that he would have been ruined by his ill-judged and unauthorised temerity. David, at length, finds an opportunity of reconciling the gratification of his noble desires with the strictest observance of duty. He is sent by his father to the camp. He feels that Goliath's audacious boasting must be opposed at all hazards; and he also feels that the Spirit of God is sufficient to enable him, a weak unarmed youth, to enter the lists with the gigantic challenger. With the same feeling it is that we should advance to the contest with the enemy of our souls. He is far more powerful than we, and those who have not faith to oppose to him the invincible weapons of the Spirit of God, cower and tremble at his advances. He defies us all, who are "the armies of the living God," "Christ's church militant here on earth." The Christian whose faith is unshaken wonders when he looks around him and beholds so many of his brethren tremble before the wily foe: but their terror is a stranger to his breast. He inquires with David, "what shall be done to the man who takes away the reproach from Israel?" And the answer is, "the man who killeth him, the king will enrich with great riches," "the riches of the glory of his inheritance." "He that overcometh," saith the Lord, "shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Faith in this promise, and hope to attain the reward, determine him to exertion. He heeds not the reproaches of a fearful brother who dares not resist the enemy; he will not listen to those who would persuade him that his strength will not sustain him, for he knows that it is not his own strength, but that of the Almighty, on which he relies. Firmly, therefore, he advances to the conflict, exclaiming "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the Armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." The grace of God is an invincible weapon, but we must employ it, or it will no more fight our spiritual battles, than a sword will defend us while we delay to draw it; or than the stones of the brook could avail David, while they only lay in the sling. We must therefore, as in everything else, so in resisting temptations, not only pray for God's grace, but do our own diligent endeavour to overcome them. And, if we do this sincerely, we may be quite sure that we shall be carried through. Again, the sling and the stone would have been useless, had not the Spirit of God guided the hand of David; and in like manner the Christian must feel convinced that the various means which are allowed him of contending with sin, are only efficacious because "it is God that worketh in him to will and to do." The certainty that all his strength is from above, and the determination actively to employ that strength, must go hand in hand; neither will effect anything without the other; but the two combined will, by the blessing of God, finally beat down Satan under our feet. 3. In our warfare with sin we shall occasionally find the armies of Israel ready to fly before the face of the enemy. We shall find some of our brethren, like Eliab, afraid to engage in the contest themselves, and yet ready to reproach us with pride and haughtiness of heart," because we have determined to live a life of severer holiness than any which they can bring themselves

to bear. In our conduct towards them we must imitate that of David. How eloquent and forcible is David's appeal to his injurious brother! "Is there not a cause" why we should persist in the firmest adherence to a practice conformable to our professions? There is every conceivable cause. There is gratitude for love which eternity could never repay; there is love which eternity could never satisfy; and there is even private interest, which is more effectually served by the service of God than by any other assignable means. By this appeal our brother may be convinced that there is some cause for what we do, and, through the mercy of God, may himself be reclaimed, and be our comrade in the battle, and our witness and companion in the triumph above. We shall also find persons in the world like Saul, equally afraid with Eliab to engage, but who will hold towards us a different language. They will tell us that we are too weak to contend with all the difficulties which we speak of, and they will offer us, as Saul offered David his armour, worldly precepts and maxims for the conduct of life, taken from their own experience and adapted to persons like themselves, but which, not being founded on the strict and undeviating model of the law of God, are no more accommodated to the use of the Christian, than the massive and cumbersome panoply of Saul became the slender and unaccustomed David. But we "cannot go with these." We have not proved them, and assuredly, did we prove them, we should find them useless. (*H. Thompson, M.A.*) *David and Goliath*:—

I. I ASK, AND I PROPOSE TO ANSWER, THE FOLLOWING QUESTION,—WHY IS ALL THIS STORY SO PARTICULARLY SET ON RECORD? 1. And first, I am of opinion, that viewed only as a passage in sacred history—a singularly life-like piece of very ancient narrative—the chapter before us might reasonably occupy a most conspicuous place. Such a page could ill be spared from Jewish history. 2. Then further,—the indications which it contains of a providential purpose and plan, would better still account for the presence of the chapter we have been considering, in the Book of Life. It sets forth how man's extremity is God's opportunity; and how He works by humble instruments; and how, from the very first, He "hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." 3. But it requires little familiarity with the method of the Holy Spirit to be aware that another and a better reason may be given, than any of these, for the large and curious details in which this narrative abounds, as well as for the prominence given to the story of David's encounter with Goliath of Gath. Be persuaded that a greater than Goliath—a greater by far than David is here. This is none other than a parable or a prophecy in action. Call to mind also our Saviour's method with the Tempter. As "there was no sword in the hand of David," so was no carnal weapon employed by David's Son when He encountered Satan and overcame him. But at least you will see that in slaying Goliath with Goliath's sword, David did in emblem the very thing which David's Son did in His last encounter with the Prince of this World. But what says the Apostle? St. Paul declares that Christ died, in order "that through Death He might destroy him that had the power of Death, that is the Devil." It was suggested that the true reason why the history of the encounter of David with Goliath is recorded with such memorable minuteness of detail, is to be found nowhere but in the Gospel. II. I PROPOSE TO ENFORCE AND EXPLAIN IT. Does anyone then inquire, How can there really exist such a correspondence between a type and its antitype; seeing that the two histories are severed from one another by full a thousand years? 1. Let us not err, like the Sadducees of old, because we "know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." So many and such remarkable points of resemblance and analogy cannot be all accidental. It is simply incredible. All antiquity cannot be mistaken. The wisest of the moderns cannot be dreamers all. The loom in which the stuff was woven proves to be of Heaven, not of Earth: and the workmanship is in consequence Divine, not Human. Images of Divine mysteries are to be seen inwrought, here and there: colours other than were imagined: forms and faces which recall the things of Eternity: words which would be meaningless—deeds which would be very trifles—unless they are freely interpreted, as they claim a right to be, of God and of Christ. 2. Then, as for the use of such an exhibition of things future. I can see at once very many uses. No stronger proof of the Divinity of the narrative can be imagined. That the same inspiring Spirit was at work with the writers of either covenant, is plain. That the Gospel was contemplated before the Delivery of the Law, becomes abundantly established. This entire system has a kind of prophetic cogency and convincingness of its own; which will, with some minds, outweigh every other

proof of the entire Inspiration of Holy Scripture. The consequences of our Saviour's victory over Satan we can, of course, only guess at. That some very mysterious circumstances of triumph were transacted in the unseen World, cannot be doubted; but express Revelation is silent. Note, however, that "the spoiling of the Egyptians" at the Exodus, is again and again spoken of: nay, is brought into marked and mysterious prominence. Lastly, when our Saviour Christ, describes His own victory over Satan under the figure of the Stronger than the strong—who cometh on the strong man armed and taketh from him the armour wherein he trusted;—He is careful to add, as one consequence of His victory, that He "spoiled the other's house;" and again, that He "divided his spoils." And to this agree the words of the prophet Isaiah,—“He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death.” . . . And now with all this before you, confess that the circumstantial relation concerning what David did with Goliath's armour—Goliath's sword—Goliath's head—becomes doubly interesting, doubly precious! “Glorious hint of the completeness of Christ's victory!” cries the Christian student. “So may all Thine enemies perish, O Lord!” We eagerly confess that there are other lessons, another class of lessons, lying on the surface of the narrative. This may be called the moral side of Holy Scripture. (1.) “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” He made God's past mercies a pledge of mercies yet in store: God's past deliverances he regarded as an earnest of deliverances yet future. (2.) “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts.” The contrast here is between the World's weapons and those which God commands;—the secular, as contrasted with the Divine method. It is the Church's confidence against the World's might. Divested of its accidental shape, these words of David express the faithful soul's individual readiness to fight in God's strength; to conduct its warfare (and what is our whole life but a warfare?)—to conduct its warfare, I say, in implicit reliance on God. (*J. W. Burgon, M.A.*) *David's Victory:—IN THE BATTLE OF LIFE GOOD MEN HAVE TO FIGHT A POWERFUL FOE.* Satan is strong, subtle, and experienced adversary. No opponent is too powerful for him; no attack too difficult, and no place too sacred for assault. 1. In the battle of life we have to contend with numerous adversaries. 2. In the battle of life we are often hindered by those who ought to help us. “A man's foes,” &c. 3. In the battle of life we are animated by various feelings. 4. In the battle of life past victories strengthen us for future conflicts. II. *IN THE BATTLE OF LIFE GOOD MEN NEED DIVINE ASSISTANCE.* “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, whom thou hast defied.” This dependence was right for four reasons. 1. It ensured the right help for the combat. 2. It awakened a right spirit for the combat. Goliath was an idolator; he treated the God of Israel with contempt. David had a profound faith in God's supremacy. 3. It led to a right selection of weapons for the combat. The sling multiplied David's chances of success, and afforded him greater protection by keeping his opponent at a distance. It is wise to keep our enemies as far from us as possible. 4. It secured a right issue in the combat. Appearances are often against true men and sound principle. Appearances are against the Church now, but ultimately the Church will triumph. Appearances were against Christ, but a momentary defeat was turned into a glorious victory. It is sufficient for us to know the issue will be right. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *Christian heroism:—*The Old Testament has just three stories of moral heroism carried to the verge of martyrdom. They bring before us five heroic figures—David, Daniel, the Three Children. To-day we are met by the first of these stories. “Are you like the one or like the other? Are you a member of the average, or just the one exception out of thousands? Do you stand with the powerful Saul, and all his armed soldiers, of all of whom it stands so pitilessly recorded, “When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid”? Or, is there something still within you after all these years which constrains you as part of your being to stand out alone and put that question of Divine curiosity befitting either a child or a hero, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” It never even entered into the head of David that such a foe as this Goliath could win the day. He saw through the man in an instant. He had hurled a foul reproach against the people of God, his doom was as certain

as if he already lay stretched upon the plain with the stone deep in his forehead. Then, again, David had reason for his faith. The child was father of the man. Observe yet again, David would fight only with his own weapons, not with the more perfect weapons of others. He would be just himself. And yet once more, David felt as few even of the greatest ever have it given to them to feel, the immeasurable difference between material force and moral force, between man at his proudest and God using his feeblest instrument. That is our poor, prosaic language as we try to sum up the moral and incomparable act of daring; but not such the language of the young hero poet at the grandest moment of his life. Now you do not need me to remind you that this history is also parable. It is not only a record of heroism, it is, further, a type of all moral conflict. Young children, as they read it in the nursery, half expect to fight some day that real Goliath. We have other visions of the powers which war against the soul. We sometimes almost wish that the issue was equally clear and simple and, so to speak, localised. "Then the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, and there was a valley between them." Impossible there and then to doubt who were the Lord's people and on which side you should range yourself—as impossible as it would have been on this day of July seventy-seven years ago, before Wellington's great fight at Salamanca, for any Englishman to doubt on which of the two Spanish hills he should offer his life to his country. There the historian describes the opposing armies as exchanging cannonades from the tops of those hills, on whose frowning rocks, he says, the contending generals stood like ravenous vultures watching for the quarry. An imposing picture this. We almost see the scene; but now, in our day, is that, I ask, a fair type of our spiritual battlefield? Are there two, and but two, separate armies? Is there always a valley between them? If some formidable champion appears, challenging us and our friends to the combat, are we quite sure from which corner of the field he will come up, and whether we can truly and fairly be satisfied that to defy Israel and Israel's God he is come up? "Ah!" we sometimes say to ourselves, "if only the trouble were so clearly defined, just a battle between Israel and the Philistines, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, purity and uncleanness, mercy and cruelty, freedom and slavery, reverent piety on the one side, and arrogant, insolent Atheism on the other; if only it were a pitched battle between two recognised hosts, leader against leader, army against army. And, thank God, there are some issues which are absolutely clear. There are those upward struggles of which the three fair mountain tops, temperance, soberness, chastity are the goal and the prize. These struggles are both outward and inward. There is the inward struggle. We do not attempt to describe it, only we say from our hearts, "God help each brother and each sister to fight it through His strength and not their own." But the struggle may be outward also. The talk about some book or some trial, the smile, the shrug of the shoulder, the innuendo, the sneer—there is the challenge to test what you are worth, to make you show your colours, to prove whether you will take a safe but ignoble refuge with the silent, cowering majority, or whether you will confess Christ before men and say boldly what you think or feel. It is in battles of this kind that the insight of David and the faith of David are both needed and found. Now, as then, the majority do nothing, they are cowed by a vast distrust, they start already beaten. In truth they walk by sight, and not by faith. But thank God there are faithful among the faithless. The David heart is still beating; there are those who are certain that the bad cause is doomed, however confidently it swagger. But we all feel there are other contests in which the path of duty is by no means so clear. There are, so to speak, battles without a battlefield, battles which refuse to be localised or even outlined. Where is the enemy? Who is he? How far is he an enemy? Is he to be fought or is he to be first understood and then reasoned with? Is he certainly an enemy or may he be a friend in disguise, a friend, not of ourselves, which matters but little, but of God, which matters everything. Doubtless we have to fight; we have to confess Christ, and that before men as well as in the sanctuary of our own hearts, but our difficulty lies not so much in bearing taunts or confronting direct and scornful denials, as in answering to ourselves the question, "What is truth? What is Christ? What does He say of Himself? What do His holiest servants say of Him? Nay, what do His very silences imply as to His sinlessness and its one necessary source?" And yet more, what is His will as regards human life? On all such subjects there are

thinkers and writers and speakers who contemptuously place Christ on one side. That, they would say, is not His sphere. How are we to treat such men, some of whom we meet daily, many of them upright, earnest seekers after truth, it may be dear friends of our own? Are these to be regarded as our Goliaths, brutal impersonations of arrogant impiety? Hardly so. The parallel does not and will not hold. The more we try to make it hold the more we are blinding ourselves to facts and sinning against the eternal laws of charity. And this, conscience tells us, cannot be a fight on behalf of God. We can never truly confess Christ before men by using weapons which the Spirit of Christ condemns. And yet we must confess Him. We must first make up our minds as to His will, as to the principles and causes which are in His sight true and precious, and then we must be ready to act out our faith. As the kingdom of God cometh without observation, so the confessing of Christ before men in the ceaseless battle of faith and unbelief may have but few spectators, and afford but few opportunities for visible and audible heroism. And yet the true heart of David may be beating there and the strength which was perfected in David may be perfecting itself there in many a humble, self-depreciating combatant. It is by faith of this kind that Christ is still making His promise good. It is by creating in human souls a perfect trust in Himself which nothing can enfeeble or destroy. Are you willing to leave to others who do but echo while they affect to form the spirit of the age, that applause which such conformity never fails to arouse; or are you content for yourself with that other applause heard even in this life by the humble champion of faith in Jesus?

Servant of God, well done; well hast thou fought
The better fight, who single hast maintained
Against revolted multitudes the cause
Of Truth: in words mightier than they in arms;
And for the testimony of truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear than violence;
For this was all thy care to stand approved
In sight of God, though worlds judged thee perverse.

—(*Montague Butler, D.D.*) *Divine sufficiency*:—At Oxford they call the same river the Isis which at London Bridge we call the Thames: what is the difference between the two? Immense. You have only to look at the tiny stream in the old university city and then look at the broad swelling current at London Bridge bearing ships upon its ample bosom. Difference! there is only contrast. Precisely, but I will tell you the difference all the same. The difference is that the full ocean has poured its waters up to London Bridge, it has widened the channel and deepened it too, you cannot tell which is salt water and which is fresh when they have mingled together, one has come to deepen and amplify the other—the full current of the boundless sea. There is plenty more where that came from to reinforce the Thames every day. Now go out in the strength of that figure, and live your life realising that “that which drew from out the boundless deep” can be turned again home for your life and for mine; there is plenty where that came from, eternity is the source of the supply. Infinite is that to which our soul is called, and every man is omnipotent who stands before the Lord. (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*)

Ver. 47. The battle is the Lord's.—*David and Goliath*:—This familiar dramatic story has much to teach us. One lesson only is our present consideration—David's heroic and victorious faith. “Time would fail me,” said the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in his beautiful chronicle of the worthies of faith, “to tell of Gedeon and of Barak, and of Sampson and of Jephthae; of David also.” And when does his faith shine with such lustre as when, having single-handed slain Goliath, he “turned to fight the armies of the aliens”? In this narrative we see—I. **THE SURPRISES OF FAITH**. Forty days; and is he ever to be met in combat? Who will meet him? No Hebrew veteran. No well-panoplied soldier, but a young shepherd, and he with well-slung stone will be victor! Unlikely warrior! unlikely weapon! unlikely victory! A victory of faith. A surprise of faith. So has it ever been. The surprises of history are the surprises of faith. Who are the men who have “entered the kingdom” of influence wherein with abiding sceptre, they rule the human generations? Men

of faith. The great men whose names are in the Old and New Testament chronicles were less likely, according to human judgment, to leave the impress they have upon the ages. And what surprises await us if we but emulate such faith! We "can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us!" II. **THE HINDRANCES TO FAITH.** It is easy to go in company. It is easy among the faithful to deem our faith strong. But solitude tries the spirit. Celebrated is the poet's Abdiel, because "faithful found among the faithless, faithful only he." And where was another faithful beside David through all the camp of Israel? It was no ordinary foe against whom his courage kindled. Much, too, had he to hinder him in the craven spirit of Israel. Nothing in this to help David. His eye, lit with indignant courage, met no answering light in any other. Israel's only answer to Goliath's challenge was—flight! Enough in this to arrest David from offering himself for the combat. Who is he to stand forth as the pick of the nation's valour? He is brought into the presence of the king. But David had to beat down hindrance sharp and strong before he reached Saul's tent. Sharper, I think, than from any other. To be thus rebuked and slandered by a brother! But his faith stood fast. He answered not bitter with bitter. Eliab was his brother, not his Lord. "The battle was the Lord's," the battle within him as well as against Goliath. And the Lord gave him the inner victory before the outer. Had his faith failed him before Eliab he had never stood before Goliath. Hindrances to faith! "How many hindrances we meet" in the way of our heart's supreme surrender to, and reliance on, Christ! Hindrances from tyrannic evil habit whose power Christ only can break. Hindrances from our circumstances; our business methods; the worldly faithless atmosphere in which we long have lived. From those who nearest us can affect us the most; from kindred as close as—closer than—was Eliab to David. What then? All the more need for earnestness. But whether within or without, "the battle is the Lord's." III. **THE ARGUMENT OF FAITH.** Faith has varied arguments. God's promises are one. God's character is another. But experience is the argument of David. This he urges with Saul. A valid argument is that of experience. Has God ever forsaken David, even when life depended upon well-aimed blow against wild beast? As He had never forsaken him, so he never would. One victory carried with it the assurance of another. One enemy slain that all enemies should be destroyed. We too have personal memories of deliverance. These are to be cherished. They are silent promises. To the listening heart they speak of goodness to come as well as past. "Jesus Christ" is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." IV. **THE SIMPLICITY OF FAITH.** With what naturalness David enters and moves through this wondrous story! He "runs" into the camp and against Goliath with a boy's eagerness, and yet stands among the soldiers, before the king, and face to face with the loud-tongued foe with the calm heroism of seasoned warrior. He will have no controversy with Eliab. He presumes not on his former service to the king; others open for him the way; the king sends for him. He is not boastful, but tells enough of his previous prowess to secure the king's assent to his championship. If faith be simple, not marred by any self-seeking, fixed only in the Lord, set only on His glory, difficulties drop asunder into a pathway for our feet. No matter of what kind they may be. Only trust in God and do the right; let that be the constant rule of life, and you can safely leave the result with Him. Be fearful of criticism; be swayed by the opinions of men, and then the path darkens, troubles gather, and even when the right thing is done it has no acceptance with God, being done to please men and not Him. V. **THE VICTORY OF FAITH.** Calmly forth went David, a spectacle to two armies. On he went alone, yet not alone, "being," in the words of Josephus, "accompanied with an invisible assistant, who was no other than God Himself." He teaches us to fight. He assures us of victory. Under His banner "the weakest saint shall win the day." He helps to every prayer and effort of resistance. (G. T. Coster.)

Ver. 49. **And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and smote the Philistine in his forehead.—Faith working wisely.**—It would be interesting to dwell on the various personages that appear prominently in this historic scene. They are Saul, Eliab, Goliath, and David; the dismayed monarch, the envious brother, the scornful enemy, and the man of God. Whatever Saul's sins had been, he acted well on this occasion. He

did not despise the rumour of David's words but sent for him; and when he professed his readiness to fight the Philistine, "Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee." There is something very affecting in these words. Saul had violated the principles of the theocracy; he had been rejected by God, and the sentence of rejection had gone forth; "the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him;" and yet he could recognise the workings of that Spirit, be touched with expressions of godly trust, and bid God-speed to another in an exploit forbidden to himself. Poor Saul! In Eliab we have a characteristic display of genuine human nature. Goliath stands before us as a type of brute-power and blustering self-confidence. What shall we say of David? What simplicity and strength of heart appear throughout! what meekness before his angry brother, what modest dignity before Saul, what courage before Goliath, what humility and confidence before God! I. DAVID POSSESSED A STRONG AND UNWAVERING CONFIDENCE IN GOD. From whatever grounds that assurance proceeded, he felt it; and it was the secret of his calmness and strength. The inquiry may occur to us, How came David to have this faith? We do not read of any Divine declaration made to him on the subject; it is not written that God told him that he should triumph: whence then did it proceed? was it holy trust, or vain presumption? It is possible to possess a sure confidence of success, and to succeed in consequence of that confidence, and yet to have no just grounds for it; and David might have felt securely and wrought gloriously without any reasonable basis for his trust. The only ground he himself assigned was past Providence. But in connection with something else, that deliverance would have a special argumentative force. Along with his predicted destiny it would be valuable. The Lord had said, "Arise anoint him: for this is he." Thus set apart by the prophet, immunity was assured him; and the immunity already granted would justly bear the character, not of a mere fact, but of a kind of pledge and guarantee. And might there not be something more still? Is it unlawful to suppose Divine suggestion and impression? We are told, in connection with his selection as Saul's successor, that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." A like confidence may be possessed as to particular events. Who has not read of instances of strong presentiment in men having no religion, in relation to their worldly destiny, or the success of their enterprises? They were determined to reach a certain goal; they felt that they could reach it; and they did reach it: power and purpose became prophecy. The history of saints furnishes like instances. II. DAVID'S FAITH WORKED WISELY. If he had confidence in God that victory would be his, he expected victory in the way of applying his own powers and resources. It was not a miracle, but a natural operation, that he looked to for triumph. God must be in it, but not in it so as to dispense with means. The opinion is very prevalent, and the impression still more so—though neither so prevalent as they used to be—that God is in the habit of employing unlikely instruments; that, for the purpose of revealing His all-sufficiency and bringing honour to Himself, He delights to contrast results with their secondary causes, and to disappoint the calculations founded on the supposed efficiency of human agents. To hear some men talk, you might conclude that God cannot be properly said to employ instruments at all; that in Nature, and still more in Providence, and most of all in grace, they are not so much instruments that He employs as obstacles, not so much things having a tendency and fitness to accomplish His designs as things altogether unsuitable and inappropriate. Now this belief or feeling is entirely erroneous and woefully mischievous. Many are the connections in which this important truth is lost sight of, and men imagine that they do honour to God by denying or ignoring it. Sometimes the grand central truth of the Gospel is adduced as an illustration of important results brought about by unlikely means; and Paul's statements respecting "the foolishness of preaching" are made to sanction this use of the doctrine of the cross. Yet surely this is to mistake the matter altogether. We admit and maintain the need of Divine influence to render even this truth effectual—and that influence is one of the most glorious proofs of the virtue of Christ's death—but we also assert that never was truth more adapted to produce the effects proposed, to open the deep fountain of human affections, than the truth of "Christ crucified." Much the same may be said of faith, as the appointed instrument and condition of spiritual blessing. The importance attached to faith in the Bible, and the marvellous virtue ascribed to it, are often regarded as a proof of mere

arbitrariness on the part of God, having nothing to do with its inherent qualities and powers. And truly, if faith were what many deem it, a simple reception of historical facts or theological opinions, it might properly be so regarded. But if faith is, as any careful student of the New Testament may easily ascertain it to be, spiritual insight and sympathy as well as intellectual credence; if it is the reception of Gospel facts in their moral meaning and relations; it would be difficult to discover how anything except faith could realise the effects which Christ came into the world to secure. How can truth operate except by being believed? How can spiritual truth operate but through spiritual faith? The truth we are now asserting requires to be applied to spiritual human agency. Many need to be convinced of the propriety of this application of it; they do not see that the power of Christian workers has a regular relation to their qualifications. Doubtless in Greek and Roman and even Jewish eyes, the agency which Christ appointed and honoured was feeble and worthless, ridiculously so; considered simply as "of the world," and in connection with merely worldly works and aims, it was foolish, weak, base, yea nothing at all: but that is very different from saying that in God's eye, and according to spiritual laws, and for the production of spiritual effects, it was so. The doctrine we have in hand should be recognised in the sphere of physical and secular affairs. We are not perhaps in most danger here; it is in the department of God's spiritual works that we cleave to the faith and expectation of the irregular and unusual: yet is there on some minds an impression that law does not preside over our material and worldly interests, and that God does interfere to avert the natural consequences of actions and conditions. David had confidence in God, the simplest and firmest, that he would overthrow Goliath, but in the strength of that confidence he employed his familiar weapons of offence. He did just what he would have done if he had sought the destruction of the giant without any confidence in God: but his confidence doubtless enabled him to do it better than with a faithless heart he could have done it; it was an inspiring, a strengthening principle. And true faith is always such. (*A. J. Morris.*) *Common things in capable hands*:—A short time ago a geologist heard of a builder's yard where an enormous heap of stones might be purchased. The man of science bought the whole stock for a few pounds, and had the collection removed to his own premises. From the heap the geologist was able to discover many unique specimens of fossils, and to-day several of our leading museums have been enriched and smaller museums supplied with collections worth in all a large sum. Common weapons in the hand of a good man are often used by the Lord to achieve victory. God can use the simplest gifts of His workers if consecrated to His service. (*Sunday Companion.*)

Ver. 50. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone.—*David's first victory*:—I. DAVID WAS A TYPE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. The early fathers of the church were very great in opening up typical analogies. With regard to this particular transaction let us note, at the outset, that before he fought with Goliath, David was anointed of God. Samuel had gone down to Bethlehem and poured a horn of oil upon his head. The parallel will readily occur to you. Thus hath the Lord found out for Himself one whom He has chosen out of the people. With His holy oil hath He anointed him. Jesus, the antitype of David, is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The Spirit was not given by measure unto him. See how the correspondence goes on. Our Lord was sent by his Father to his brethren. As David was sent by Jesse to his brethren with suitable presents and comfortable words, in order to commune with them, even so in the fulness of time was our Lord commissioned to visit his brethren. Jesus was roughly handled by his brethren, whom He came to bless. David, you will remember, answered his brethren with great gentleness. He did not return railing for railing, but with much gentleness he endured their churlishness. In this he supplied us with but a faint picture of our beloved Master, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. We pass on to observe that David was moved by intense love of his people. He saw them defied by the Philistine. The name of Jehovah was dishonoured! That braggart giant who stalked before the hosts defied the armies of the living God! A further motive was present to stimulate his patriotic ambition. How could David's bosom fail to glow with strong emotion when he was told that the man who should vanquish and slay that Philistine should be married to the king's daughter? Such a prize might well quicken his ardour. Now in all this he mainly foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved His own: He was always ready to

lay down His life for the sheep. And then there was the joy that was set before Him that He should have the church for His spouse. Goliath is called in the Hebrew, not "champion," as we read it in the English, but the middle-man, the mediator. If you put the whole case fairly before your own minds, you will readily see the fitness of the word that is used. There is the host of the Philistines on the one side, and there is the host of Israel on the other side. A valley lies between them. Goliath says, "I will represent Philistia. I stand as the middle-man." Now, it is exactly upon that ground that the Lord Jesus Christ fought the battles of His people. We fell representatively in the first Adam, and our salvation now is by another representative—the second Adam. He is the Middleman, the "one Mediator between God and man." Mark you well that David did smite Goliath, and he smote him effectually—not in the loins, or on the hand, or on the foot—but in a vital point he delivered the stroke that laid him low. He smote him on the brow of his presumption, on the forehead of his pride. So when our Lord stood forth to contend with sin, He projected His atoning sacrifice as a stone that has smitten sin and all its powers upon the forehead. Thus, glory be to God, sin is slain. It is not wounded merely, but it is slain by the power of Jesus Christ. And remember that David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. Augustine, in his comment on this passage, very well brings out the thought that the triumph of our Saviour Jesus Christ is here set forth in the history of David. He, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." You will find the analogy capable of much amplification. Make a picture of it at your leisure, and it may prove a beneficial study and a profitable meditation.

II. DAVID AS AN EXAMPLE FOR EVERY BELIEVER IN CHRIST.

1. You cannot do David's work if you have not David's anointing. When you remember that your Divine Master tarried for the heavenly anointing, you can hardly expect to do without it.
2. David, too, stands before us as an example of the fact that our opportunity will come, if our efficiency has been bestowed, without our being very particular to seek it. David fell into position.
3. Learn from David, too, to return quiet answers to those who would roughly put you aside from your work.
4. Learn, again, from David's example, the prudence of keeping to tried weapons.
5. Next, observe that from the work which David begun he ceased not till he had finished it. He had laid the giant prone upon the soil, but he was not satisfied till he had cut off his head. I wish that some who work for Christ would be as thorough as this young volunteer was. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The giants, and how to fight them:*—All young people like to hear and read stories about giants. I suppose there is hardly a person in this country who knows how to read, but who has read the famous history of Jack the Giant Killer. I remember, when a very little boy, reading it, and thinking what a wonderful history it was. Some people pretend to think that it was hardly possible for David to throw a stone with sufficient force to sink into the giant's head. One of this class, a foolish young man, who pretended not to believe the Bible, was once riding in a stage-coach, which was full of passengers. He was trying to ridicule some of the Bible stories. Among others, he spoke of this one about David and the giant. He said he thought the giant's head must have been too hard for a boy like David to send a stone into it; and, turning to an old Quaker gentleman, who sat in the corner of the coach, he asked, "What do you think about it, sir?" "Friend," said the old gentleman, in a dry, quiet way, "I'll tell thee what I think: if the giant's head was as soft as thine it must have been very easy for the stone to get in." I want now to speak about five giants that we should all unite in trying to fight against.

I. The first giant I am to speak of is the GIANT HEATHENISM. This giant doesn't live here. He is found in countries where the Gospel is not known. His castles may be seen in Africa, and in India, in China, and in the islands of the sea. He is a huge giant. This giant is very strong, and very cruel. Well, what are we to do to this giant? Why, we must fight him, as David did Goliath. The Bible is the brook to which we must go. The truths which it contains are the stones that we must use.

II. The second giant I would speak of is the GIANT SELFISHNESS. The giant selfishness never sees, or hears, or does anything for anyone but himself. If you find that you are getting to think more of yourself than of others, then be sure the giant is after you. We must fight this giant by self-denial.

III. The third giant I want to speak about is the GIANT COVERTHOUSNESS. This giant is very large in size, and very strong in limb; but he has the tiniest little bit of a heart you ever saw. You might put it in a nutshell. The only wonder is how so huge a frame can be supported by so little a heart. But this is not all, for little as his heart is, it is as

hard as stone. He is ashamed of his name, and won't answer to it. He pretends that his right name is—frugality. But this is a great story. Frugality is a very different person. He is a good, true, honest fellow. If you ask, How are you to fight him? I answer, by learning to give. IV. The fourth giant of which I will speak is the GIANT ILL-TEMPER. But how are we to fight against this giant? I answer, By trying to be like Jesus. We always think of Him as—the “gentle Jesus, meek and mild.” Do you suppose that this giant ever got a single link of his chain on Jesus? No. V. The last giant I wish to speak about is the GIANT INTemperance. He is a very ugly-looking fellow. When he is in a good humour, and feels jolly, he puts on a silly face, and looks very foolish. But when he gets in a passion he is awful-looking, and it makes one shudder to see him. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *David and Goliath*.—The moment the words are read the instruction will be seen. 1. Helps may sometimes be so multiplied as to become hindrances. We reserve a measure of our pity for the modern Davids in the pulpit who imitate popular preachers, and in the classes who seek to reproduce the rare excellences of famous teachers more tall and more brilliant, and so fail because they stalk around in unnatural panoply, and are borne down by a greatness they cannot fill out to its full swell. 2. There is always room in the Divine purposes for proper originality in human methods. 3. The best instrument for God's service is generally that which God has bestowed on the individual worker. It is simply silly for any spiritual martinet to bluster when he sees that Christians are doing well in winning souls, and insist that David shall put on armour like Saul's when he can accomplish far more in his own way as a slinger with his brook-stones. Let all wise men and women take what Providence has put within their reach. Here comes again in a new history the old demand once made of Moses: “What is that in thy hand?” The crook he had used with the sheep in Horeb became the “rod” which divided the Red Sea. Shamgar took his ox-goad, because he was accustomed to it. Samson seized the jaw-bone of an ass, because he found it “moist” and ready when he “put forth his hand.” Dorcas did glorious good in Joppa with the needle her hand loved. 4. Giant-killing is yet the chief calling of the Church. We may call the apparently mismatched combatants Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, Truth and Error; it is invariably the worse which seems colossal, and the better which appears insignificant. Error can generally find an obsequious armour-bearer; Truth sometimes has to stand alone with a sling. Often great leaders will contribute their cast-off clothing, but they do not offer to put their extra height into risk. And the lesson is full of counsel and cheer for chivalrous souls who are valiant for the truth, that they have patience, fight with courage, and trust God for ever.

“For the God of David still guides the pebble at His will:
There are giants yet to kill—wrongs unshriven;
But the battle to the strong is not given
While the Judge of right and wrong sits in heaven.”

5. Here seems to be a register of the real worth of mere “muscular Christianity.” A few calm words from Canon Charles Kingsley might well be quoted here: “Better would it be for any one of you, young men, to be the stupidest and the ugliest of mortals, to be the most diseased and abject of cripples, the most silly, nervous, incapable personage who ever was a laughing-stock for the boys upon the streets, if only you lived, according to your powers, the life of the Spirit of God, than to be as perfectly gifted, as exquisitely organised in body and mind, as David himself, and not to live the life of the Spirit of God, the life of goodness, which is the only life fit for a human being wearing the human flesh and soul which Christ took upon Him on earth, and wears for ever in heaven, a Man indeed in the midst of the throne of God.” 6. It is the weakest sort of so-called honour which has to assert itself in bluster. 7. The calmness of faith is always resolute and self-possessed. “The battle is the Lord's.” There is a motto for all Christian life. John Bunyan has mentioned some of our modern giants: giant Despair, and giant Grim; giant Pope, and giant Pagan. Perhaps we could think of a few more who have come nearer yet to our own experience, and might have been named in the history of Christiana and the children. There is giant Pride, and giant Profanity; giant Untruth, giant Envy, giant Appetite; all of these confront us and with some of them we have had fights. But we can stand before them quite calmly if only we remember we come “in the name of the Lord of hosts.” 8. The best defence

against evil is found in a swift attack. 9. There can be no Providence in God's government that is not in some sense truly special. 10. The weapons of the wicked are often at the last turned against themselves. 11. The victory of faith belongs only to Jehovah. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *David's victory over Goliath*:—I. OBSERVE, FIRST, FROM THIS ACCOUNT, THAT A HUMBLE STATION IS NO HINDRANCE TO THE GRACE OF GOD. David, unknown and unnoticed, feeding his father's sheep at Bethlehem, was chosen by God to be an instrument to promote His glory, and to do great good in the world. II. OBSERVE, AGAIN, THAT FAITHFULNESS AND DILIGENCE IN APPOINTED DUTIES IS THE WAY TO HONOUR AND RESPECT. It was so with David. In the performance of his daily duties, in obedience to his father, in submission to man, he was prepared for great and noble deeds. III. BUT THE LESSON ESPECIALLY TAUGHT US IN THIS CHAPTER IS THAT WHICH THE APOSTLE PAUL ELSEWHERE ENFORCES: "MY BRETHREN, BE STRONG IN THE LORD, AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If we trust in Him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour, we need not fear our spiritual enemies—the enemies of our souls. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *The victorious races*:—Look now with me, a moment, at another element of strength in the Missionary Church. Not only is the power of God promised to her fidelity, but the wisdom of God is visible in the choice of her materials. In our modern times, God has put His gospel faith into the best races on the globe. David has better blood in his veins than Goliath. The races to which God has intrusted His staff and five smooth stones of gospel truth are the same races that drew up Magna Charta and the declaration of Independence—the races that have made iron types to talk and iron ships to swim—that have strung the telegraphic nerves through humanity's limbs, and have woven out of revealed law the highest forms yet reached of Christian civilisation. For the spread of His gospel, God has made Great Britain strong, and Holland industrious, and Germany learned, and has saved the American Republic as by fire. The welfare of Christianity has God bound up with the welfare of certain races and nations. If this be so, how vitally important it is that those nations who essay to Christianise other nations should themselves be Christianised to the very core! (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

Vers. 52, 53. **And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted and pursued the Philistines.**—*Keeping the victory*:—When General Wolfe was mortally wounded at the battle of Quebec, he said after his third injury, "Hold me up; do not let my brave boys see I am wounded." A little later, as his blood was fast ebbing away, he said, in faint tones, "The victory is ours! Oh! keep it." So, when our Lord died for our sins on the cross, He virtually said to His redeemed ones, "The victory is ours. Oh! keep it." And this is the victory that makes His victory ours, and overcometh the world, even our faith. There must be no surrender by sin or unbelief of what He has obtained for us. (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Ver. 58. **Whose son art thou, young man?**—*Relation of ancestry to character*:—I am not surprised that when this shepherd-boy (ushered in and introduced by Abner, commander-in-chief) entered the Royal presence with the ghastly trophy, his fingers clutching the hair of Goliath's head, the king looked at him with admiring wonderment, and put the plain, straightforward question of my text, "Whose son art thou, young man?" It was natural that Saul should wish to know something of the antecedents of so brave a youth; doubtless, he wanted all the particulars about his age, the place of his birth, his upbringing, his occupation, and so forth; but he conceived that such signal valour must be hereditary and ancestral; so his first and main inquiry touched the parentage of the juvenile warrior, "Young man, who was your father?" Whatever views we may hold upon the subject of heredity, there cannot be a doubt as to the fact that qualities, moral, intellectual, and physical, are transmitted from father to son. Some families are noted for longevity; others for good looks; others for love of adventure. The aquiline nose runs in the line of the Buonapartes; the large lip in the House of Hapsburg; the bald head in the House of Hanover. In some instances there is a certain expression of countenance traceable to the third or fourth generation. I call on one of you at your lodging, and take up the portrait album on your table; and instantly say, as I point to a photograph there, though I never saw the original, "You don't need to tell me who that is; one can see at a glance that you are a chip of the old block." Mental qualities are transmitted too. In

one case it is musical talent that descends; in another, the love of poetry; in a third, the gift of acquiring languages. And what is yet more to the point, moral tendencies, bad, good, and indifferent, are passed on from parent to child. Only last week I heard of a case in which a confirmed slave of alcohol actually said, "My father was a drunkard, and my grandfather was a drunkard before him; I shall be a drunkard too; we belong to a race of drunkards. I may as well accept my fate, it cannot be helped." On the other hand, noble and generous features of character appear sometimes to run in the blood. If there could be anything like a pious momentum coming from a long line of Christian progenitors, some of us ought to be godly indeed. St. Paul was not afraid of being misunderstood by Timothy when he wrote to him, "I thank God when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice." And this suggests the truth, that on the mother's side, perhaps even more than the father's, this law of heredity seems to prevail. When David answered King Saul's question he made no mention of his mother, but there is nothing in that omission; for he quite understood the monarch's object, that he wished to know his family connection. Could I be near you in the hour of strong temptation, when you are ready to belie all the holy memories of a pious home, I would whisper in your ear the question—till you would start back with loathing from the vice to which you were going to yield—"Whose son art thou, young man?" I. My first word is to those of you who HAVE SPRUNG FROM A LOWLY PARENTAGE. If there is anything more utterly contemptible than for one who has risen a bit in the world to be ashamed of his humble origin, it is the conduct of him who ridicules his low-born brother. Sometimes we hear it remarked, with a sneer and a curl of the lip, concerning some young man who is doing well, and carrying all before him, "Oh, he has risen from the ranks!" Well, the more honour to him, if it is so; and the more shame upon the silly, contemptible snobbishness that could be guilty of such an utterance. It is in no spirit of cheap Radicalism that I say this. It is not a question either of patrician or plebeian sympathies at all. I will venture to say it is simple common-sense. Blue blood, as it is called, is by no means the purest blood. I believe that some of you have far more reason to be proud of your pedigree than could you trace it to Tudor or Plantagenet. II. My next word is upon the heavy responsibility that rests on you who HAVE BEEN BORN IN THE LINE OF A CHRISTIAN PARENTAGE. We shall not talk of rank now, but of character. You come out of a godly nest. Your father was a man of God, your mother a sincere believer. A long line of Christian inheritance is something to rejoice in. When a man can make out a genealogical tree of his own family, and point out to me, that root, stem, branch, and twig were all holy, I say he has good cause to thank God, and esteem himself as belonging to the peerage of the skies. Well did William Cowper say—

"My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, the rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The sou of parents passed into the skies."

"Whose son art thou, young man?" It is a frightful aggravation of a man's guilt when his whole life is a contradiction given to his father's counsels and his mother's prayers; when the child of a godly ancestry tramples on all the holy traditions and memories of the past, and determinedly breaks through the moral fences that had been set around him. Such persons generally make an awful rebound. The worst of men are apostates from the purest faith. Tell me what good influence a young man has resisted and defied, and I will give you the gauge of his depravity. III. I am not afraid to put the question even to those of you who HAVE HAD NO SUCH ADVANTAGE. I thank God that I have seen many a clean bird come out of a foul nest. If ever a man might have been supposed to have had bad blood in his veins, it was Hezekiah, who was the son of one of the worst monarchs that ever reigned over Israel. He was cursed with a most polluted parental example. One might have said of that young man that he was born to vice. And yet he turned out a devout and holy man of God. Yes, Divine grace is stronger even than blood. History can supply many an instance, to the praise of Him who oftentimes finds the brightest diamonds in the darkest mines, and the richest pearls in the deepest seas. IV. I feel that I cannot part with the text without giving it a PURELY SPIRITUAL MEANING, in respect of which there are but two pater-

nities, and one or other of these each of you must own. Would to God that, as I address to you all the question, "Whose sons are ye, young men?" you could with one voice reply, "Behold, now are we the sons of God." "Ye are of your father, the devil," said Christ, with awful plainness of speech, to the unbelieving Jews; and let it never be forgotten that, unless we are the subjects of Divine adoption, we are all "the children of the wicked one." I tell you that, whether you realise it or not, you have, each of you, Royal blood in your veins. Your pedigree traces back to the King of kings. St. Luke goes right up to the fountain head when he finishes his genealogical table thus: "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the Son of God." Awake to the glorious fact, and claim your high inheritance! Amen. (*J. T. Davidson.*)

Your pedigree:—The king saw, what you and I see, that this question of heredity is a mighty question. The longer I live the more I believe in blood—good blood, bad blood, pure blood, humble blood, honest blood, thieving blood, heroic blood, cowardly blood. The tendency may skip a generation or two, but it is sure to come out, as in a little child you sometimes see a similarity to a great grandfather whose picture hangs on the wall. That the physical and mental and moral qualities are inheritable is patent to anyone who keeps his eyes open. The similarity is so striking sometimes as to be amusing. Great families, regal or literary, are apt to have the characteristics all down through the generation, and what is more perceptible in such families may be seen on a smaller scale in all families. A thousand years have no power to obliterate the difference. Scottish blood means persistence, English blood means reverence for the ancient, Welsh blood means religiosity, Danish blood means fondness for the sea, Indian blood means roaming disposition, Celtic blood means ferocity, Roman blood means conquest. The Jewish facility for accumulation you may trace clear back to Abraham, of whom the Bible says "he was rich in silver and gold and cattle," and to Isaac and Jacob, who had the same characteristics. This law of heredity asserts itself without reference to social or political condition, for you sometimes find the ignoble in high place and the honourable in obscure place. A descendant of Edward I a toll gatherer. A descendant of Edward II a doorkeeper. A descendant of the Duke of Northumberland a trunk maker. Some of the mightiest families of England are extinct, while some of those most honoured in the peerage go back to an ancestry of hard knocks and rough exterior. This law of heredity is entirely independent of social or political conditions; for you find avarice and jealousy and sensuality and fraud having full swing in some families. The violent temper of Frederick William is an inheritance from Frederick the Great. It is not a theory founded by worldly philosophy, but by Divine authority. Do you not remember how the Bible speaks of a chosen generation, of the generation of the righteous, of the generation of vipers, of an untoward generation, of a stubborn generation, of the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation? So that the text comes to-day with the force of a projectile hurled from mightiest catapult, "Whose son art thou, young man?" "Well," says some one, "that theory discharges me from all responsibility. Born of sanctified parents, we are bound to be good, and we cannot help ourselves. Born of unrighteous parentage, we are bound to be evil, and we cannot help ourselves." Two inaccuracies. As much as if you should say, "The centrifugal force in nature has a tendency to throw out everything to the periphery, and therefore everything will go out to the periphery." You know as well as I know that you can make the centripetal force overcome the centrifugal, and you can make the centrifugal overcome the centripetal. As when there is a mighty tide of good in a family that may be overcome by determination to evil, as in the case of Aaron Burr, the libertine, who had for father President Burr, the consecrated; as in the case of Pierrepoint Edwards, the scourge of New York society seventy years ago, who had a Christian ancestry; while, on the other hand, some of the best men and women of this day are those who have come of an ancestry of which it would not be courteous to speak in their presence. The practical and useful object of this sermon is to show to you that if you have come of a Christian ancestry, then you are solemnly bound to preserve and develop the glorious inheritance; or if you have come of a depraved ancestry, then it is your duty to brace yourself against the evil tendency. I want to arouse the most sacred memories of your heart while I make the impassioned interrogatory in regard to your pedigree: "Whose son are thou, thou young man?" I. I ACCOST ALL THOSE WHO ARE DESCENDED OF A CHRISTIAN ANCESTRY. I do not ask if your parents were perfect. There are no perfect people now, and I

do not suppose there were any perfect people then. You have a responsibility vast beyond all measurement. God will not let you off with just being as good as ordinary people when you had such extraordinary advantage. Ought not a flower planted in a hothouse be more healthy than a flower planted outside in the storm? Ought not a factory turned by the Housatonic do more work than a factory turned by a thin and shallow stream? Ought not you of great early opportunity be better than those who had cradle unblessed? Your Heavenly Father charges against you all the advantage of a pious ancestry—so many prayers, so much Christian example, so many kind entreaties—all these gracious influences, one tremendous aggregate, and He asks you for an account of it. Ought not you to be better than those who had no such advantage? Better have been a foundling picked up off the city commons than with such magnificent inheritance of consecration to turn out differently. Oh, the power of ancestral piety. Oh, the power of ancestral prayer! II. I TURN FOR A MOMENT TO THOSE WHO HAD EVIL PARENTAGE, and I want to tell you that the highest thrones in heaven and the mightiest triumphs and the brightest crowns will be for those who had evil parentage, but who by the grace of God conquered—conquered. Find out what the family frailty is, and set body, mind, and soul in battle array. Conquer you will. I think the genealogical table was put in the first chapter of the New Testament not only to show our Lord's pedigree, but to show that a man may rise out of an ancestral line and beat back successfully all the influences of bad heredity. See in that genealogical table that good King Asa was born of vile King Abia. See in that genealogical table that Joseph and Mary and the most illustrious Being that ever touched our world, or ever will touch it, had in His ancestral line scandalous Rahab and Tamar, and Bathsheba. Perhaps the star of hope may point down to your manger. Perhaps you are to be the hero or the heroine that is to put down the brakes and stop that long line of genealogical tendencies, and switch it off on another track from that on which it has been running for a century. Estranged children from the home—stead come back through the open gate of adoption. There is royal blood in our veins; there are crowns on our escutcheon. Our Father is King, our Brother is King; we may be kings and queens unto God for ever. "Whose son art thou, thou young man?" Son of God! Heir of immortality! Take your inheritance! (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Heredity and celebrity*:—I confess I am rather interested in the whole subject of heredity. I have been at some pains to inform myself as to the calling or occupation of the fathers of many men who have risen to honourable distinction in the world; and, perhaps, you would like to have some of the results of that inquiry. I shall select a few at random taken from a very varied list. The distinguished astronomer Kepler was the son of an officer in the army; the poet Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott, of attorneys; Chatterton, of a schoolmaster; Handel, of a surgeon; Thomas Hood and Samuel Johnson, of booksellers; Mozart, of a bookbinder; Blackstone, the eminent lawyer, of a silk mercer; the poet Pope, of a linendraper; Sir Isaac Newton, of a farmer; Thomas Arnold, of a tax collector; De Foe and Akenside, of butchers; Dr. Jeremy Taylor, of a hairdresser; the artist Turner, of a barber; Christopher Columbus, of a wool comber; the great astronomer Halley, of a soap boiler; Haydn, of a wheelwright; Luther, of a miner; Lord Eldon, the famous lawyer, of a collier; George Fox, of a weaver; Captain Cook, of an agricultural labourer; and last, but not least, John Bunyan, of a tinker. (*Great Thoughts.*) *The value of a noble ancestry*:—There is the prophecy of a holy ancestry. (2 Tim. i. 5.) Oliver Wendell Holmes remarks that most people think that any difficulty of a physical sort can be cured if a physician is called early enough. "Yes," Dr. Holmes replies, "but early enough would commonly be two hundred years in advance." There is the tremendous law of heredity, the awful sweep and reach of which science is just now beginning to throw some adequate light upon. But this law takes in its strong grasp not only features and damages and incitements which are physical; it pushes onward into coming generations characteristics which are mental and moral also. And if one be budded out of a religious ancestry, it is a vast boon and blessing. And to be steadily determined to be true to such ancestry, and to refuse to run athwart the strain of it, is a tremendous help and impetus in warring the good warfare. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) **I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite.**—*Undeclared royalty*:—That is a very simple account for a man to give of himself, yet it answered the question which elicited it. Standing before the king, grasping the head of a man who made Israel quake, a nation looking at him, yet he speaks as if a stranger had accosted him in some peaceful retreat of the pasturage! David

might have said, "Samuel came to my father's house in search of a king. He passed by my brethren one by one; I was sent for at length from the sheep-fold, and Samuel anointed me king of Israel. Behold in this bleeding head the first sign and pledge of my kingly power!" Instead of speaking so, he merely said, with a child's beautiful simplicity, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." 1. Learn that men may be anointed long before their power is officially and publicly declared. God may have put his secret into their heart long before he puts the diadem upon their brow. We do not know to whom we are speaking. 2. Learn that God's arrangements are not extemporaneous. The men who shall succeed to all good offices are known to Him from the beginning to the end. To us the prospect may be dark, but to God the whole course is clear; the successor is anointed, but not yet declared. 3. In studying the period of David's history which is comprised between his anointing and the killing of Goliath, we shall discover some qualities in David which we may well imitate. Soon after his anointing, David became harp-player to the king. This seems to be a descent. Are there not many apparent anti-climaxes in life? Is this a conspicuous example of them? "Play the harp! Why, I am king," David might have said. "Why should I waste my time in attempting to prolong the life of the man who is upon my throne? The sooner he dies, the sooner I shall reign; not one soothing note will I evoke from my harp!" Had David spoken so, he would have dropped from the high elevation which becomes the spirit of a king. Are we skilled in music? Let us help those who are sad. Have we this world's goods? Let us seek out the poor, that they may bless us as the messengers of God. Have we power to say beautiful words? Let us speak to men who are weary of the common tumult which is around them. To help a man is the honour of true kingliness. After this engagement as harp-player, David went home to pursue his usual avocations. How well he carried the burden of his prospects! We see no sign of impatience. He did not behave himself as a child who, having seen a toy, cries until it is put into his hands. David had the dignity of patience. He carried the Lord's secret in a quiet heart. When David came to see his fighting brethren, by the express instructions of his father Jesse, he disclosed a feature in his character in true keeping with what we have seen. When he had become acquainted with the case he at once looked at outward circumstances in their moral bearing. Other men, including Saul himself, were talking about mere appearances. They did not see the case as it really was. Their talk, in fact, was strongly atheistic. Now for another tone! David called Goliath, not a giant, not a soldier, but an uncircumcised Philistine, who had defied the armies of the living God! This is a moral tone. This is precisely the tone that was wanted in the talk of degenerate Israel! As used by David, the very word uncircumcised involved a moral challenge. This tone retrieves the honour of any controversy. It brings strength with it, and hope, and dignity. Oh, for one David in every controversy! Men lose themselves in petty details, they fight about straws, they see only the surface; David saw the spiritual bearing of all things, and redeemed a controversy from vulgarity and atheism by distinctly and lovingly pronouncing the name of God. The atheist counts the guns, the saint looks up to God; the atheist is terrified by the size of the staff, the saint is inspired by his faith in right and purity. Such a man cannot fail. David interpreted the past so as to qualify himself for the future. When Saul doubted his inability to cope with the Philistine, David recounted some of his recollections as a shepherd. The past should be our prophet. David confided in the unchangeableness of God. Forms of danger vary; but the delivering power remains the same. The great fight of life is a contention between the material and the spiritual. Goliath represents the material; he is towering in stature, vast in strength, terrible in aspect. David represents the spiritual: he is simple, trustful, reverent; the merely fleshly side of his power is reduced, to the lowest possible point—he fights under the inspiration of great memories, in a deeply religious spirit, not for personal glory but for the glory of the living God. As a contest between strength and strength, the scene was simply ridiculous. Viewed materially, the Philistine was perfectly right when he disdained David, and scornfully laughed at the weapons which the stripling produced. Goliath showed a most justifiable contempt; as a materialist, he could indeed have adopted no other tone. David made no boast of his weapons. He pronounced the name of God, and put his life in the keeping of the Most High. The application of the truths of this lesson is easy as a matter of inference, but hard as a matter of realisation. Some men save, others are saved. Such is the law of sovereignty. This law of

sovereignty penetrates the whole scheme and fabric of life. David saved, Israel was saved; activity and passivity make up the sphere of this life. Without any attempt at fanciful spiritualising, we see in David the type of the one Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, who bruised the serpent's head, and won for us the one victory through which we may have eternal life. "Crown Him Lord of all." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Spiritual incongruities*:—I have tried to apprehend the character of David. David was a prophet, but I shall speak most of him as a man; and I desire most to call your attention to him in his actual and his merely human life. This it will be my effort briefly to sketch, and, as I sketch it, to connect such reflections with the statements as arise naturally out of the incidents. The opening of David's public course glows with sublime ardour, and is full of heroism. He will go forward against presumptuous self-confidence. He understood where the noblest strength lay, and nobly he used it. He showed, what the whole history of man exhibits—that faith in Divine protection, that devotion to conscience, that intellectual skill, that moral enthusiasm, can trample down resistance, however gigantic. What is muscle at any time against mind? What is passion against belief? What is frenzied anger against deliberative conviction? Reverence and Reason are the true conquerors of the earth. To them belong the victory, and to them belong dominion. David stands out, as a type of this great power. The monster fell dead before his missile, and he, the victor, has left a record of our learning, to reveal to us, for everlasting ages, what is the potency of the gifted and the inspired mind. He may be placed as the deathless incarnation of what trust and thought can accomplish against tyranny and force. 1. David was one of those great and original men, whom humanity at rare intervals produces. His mind was of that order which creates the age in which it lives, and that saves or destroys the nation which it rules. His character was that which Time, if it would, is not able to kill; that which History is forced to remember. It is the destiny of transcendent power, whether it be good or whether it be bad, to leave everlasting impression on the affairs of mankind. David was a man of power, various and exalted. Strong in intellect, and wise in experience; strong in will, and commanding in expression; strong in every attribute which compels obedience, he was accomplished also in the qualities that win it. Poetry, music, architecture, he loved with extreme desire; he advanced them with a noble zeal. In some points he resembled Bonaparte. Like Bonaparte, he arose from the people, and sat upon his throne by their will; like Bonaparte, his people adored him, and would endure to the last extremity of human nature for his interest. Like Bonaparte, he was a conqueror. His circumstances were created by the age, and not by himself. He had to meet and to subdue them as best he could. Like Bonaparte, he was a dictator. He had, to be sure, his great and mighty men, for he knew, by the glance of a look, the man who was born to control his associates; and as he knew the man, he selected him. Like Bonaparte, he was a legislator. He gave his people laws, and he established among them a settled and systematic administration. But he had a piety, and a faith, and a devotional sensibility, of which the mighty modern had not a single impulse. There is another modern, to whom David also bears, in some degree, a resemblance—Peter the Great, of Russia. David, as Peter, found only barbarism in the land; but, ere he died, it was exalted and civilised. The great king of Israel, as the great czar of Russia, was the patron of every art, and the friend of every genius who could raise his country into prosperity and dignity. He found his brethren dwelling in tents; he departed from among them living in palaces. He found them scattered tribes; he left them a collected and compacted nation. Under the guidance of his stupendous mind, the land was filled with plenty, the sea was covered with commerce, literature was encouraged, industry was successful, victory waited on arms, and wisdom prevailed in counsel. If we contrast David with Saul, David appears as superior as heaven is to earth. It is superiority, not of an improved succession, but of a new creation. Saul, like David, was exalted from common to kingly life. Saul, like David, was a man of battle, and a man of blood; and here the resemblance closes. To the end, Saul was only the savage warrior, a man of might and daring, a man of prowess and enthusiasm. This agrees fully with his personal qualities, and is in no wise opposed to his original condition. It is all that we might imagine, and our expectations are neither surpassed nor contradicted. Commanding in the qualities which make a man of war, David had, in more signal perfection, those which in a better period would have made a man of peace. 2. The history of David leaves one impression on the mind deeply and plainly; and that is, that moral principle does not always

correspond with devotional sensibility. I do not say that devotional sensibility is not a fine element in moral action; nay, I hold that, without it, the highest beauty is wanting to character and to virtue. But still, devotional sensibility may be found in many persons, who are weak in right principles, and unstable in right purposes. How fervently could David pray, but how feebly did David practise! Yet David was not really insincere. It is well and wisely written—"The heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it?" Much and strange contradiction there is in life, but less of positive hypocrisy than is imagined. David is a type of many kings and many men. The example, in this character which Scripture gives us, is ever and ever repeated in history; and it is as often corroborated in daily life. And, in our own experience, how changeable and uncertain are our characters? In an hour we passionately resolve, and in another as recklessly break our resolution. Instability and inconsistency there are in this, but sincerity there is in it also. The real philosophy of the matter is that the religious element, like the other elements of our nature, must be good or bad, as it is directed. By the religious element I mean, in this connection, the faculty which connects us with the invisible and eternal world; and this, directed by ignorance and passion, may do, without remorse, deeds that have no name, but, influenced by knowledge and by benignity, raises a man, not simply to be a little lower than the angels, but to be their equal and their companion. But the merely devotional man is not necessarily a virtuous man; nay, he is not necessarily a benevolent man; he may fail in rectitude, or he may fail in humanity. Of this principle, the whole history of the Church gives sufficient evidence; for many a devout man has been dishonest, and many a devout man has been cruel. I do not join in the common cry which stigmatizes all such as hypocrites. I do not believe that the failings of those on whom the world charged inconsistency always sprang from deceit: I simply believe that they were men of partial development, and that, in the exaggerated expression of some faculties, others were disproportionately, and thence injuriously, weakened. Wickedness there is abundantly in the world, and so far there is, in the world, a universal subject and cause of grief. But, when sin unites with noble gifts, it is exceedingly sinful. Let me offer a few words—a few words on that blood-guiltiness, for which some men, through David, assault the Bible. We are to judge David as we judge other men, by his times and by his circumstances. His age was one of rudeness and it was one of blood. It was a period when men got readily into conflict, and when conflict was associated with little that was forbearing or magnanimous. The barbarian instincts to contention were those which then were the most developed. Prowess was the great test of excellence. Might was the principle of right. The military hero was "the highest style of man." Shall we make that David's sin, which was David's fate? Was he not a warrior by the necessity of events, rather than by any personal contrivance? What else could his life have been, but that of warfare? By what means could he have avoided being, throughout his course, a warrior? David's career was splendid and successful. Was he happy? Was he even moderately happy? When David sat upon the throne of Israel did he never recall, in melancholy vision, the green pastures and the still waters, where his breast was calm, and where his step was free. David was not a happy man. Despondency settled on his soul, and calamities, treading fast upon each other, haunted all his latter days. He is an example that no grandeur, no prosperity, no impunity from station, no glory of command, no flattery of obedience, can strip sin of its hatefulness or rob it of its sting; that God's eye is on the monarch as the beggar; that, in the depth of millions, their transgression can find them out; and that, in the stern truth of God's own sentence, it can shriek within their conscience the terrible rebuke of Divine condemnation. David, too, is an evidence, if evidence were wanted, that grandeur is a poor shelter against grief. When shame fell upon David's house, when hatred placed one child in deadly feud against another, the glare of royalty was a small matter in the sadness of nature. What was kingship to the English Charles, when, after arraignment before his own people, he clasped his children for the last time to his bosom, before his going to the block? What was kingship to the French Louis when he felt he must leave his helpless wife and orphans to the mercies of the mad avengers, who began in his own blood the retaliation for centuries of suffering, which was only to be accomplished in a wilderness of death? What was kingship to David when his own flesh were his enemies? I have spoken of David as I proposed, as one within the circle of our imperfect humanity, and I have spoken of him in the spirit of humanity.

In this spirit I view in him an incarnation of its capacities, and an example of its weakness. In this spirit I cannot think of him otherwise than in solemn reverence and solemn sorrow. With this solemn sorrow and solemn reverence, I contemplate his mighty mind; with reverence I see its grandeur; with sorrow I behold its fall from that grandeur, to wilder itself in madness, or to lose itself in folly. I learn how strength may work for wretchedness, how privileges may turn to penalties. Looking upon David comprehensively, in his greatness, in his abasement, in his repentance, in his guilt, in his aspiration, in his affliction, I am reminded of his own words, suggested doubtless by his own experience—"Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity!" (*Henry Giles.*)

CHAPTER XVIII.

Vers. 1—4. The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David.—
The story of a great love:—True Christianity consists in devotion to a Person, not in the acceptance of a series of doctrines or theories, nor even in the adoption of a certain line of conduct. Doctrines have their proper place, and conduct which is pure and godlike will necessarily flow from it; but the essence of true Christianity consists, as I have said, in the devotion of the human heart to a Person—a personal God revealed in Jesus Christ. Without this our religion is but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; we are devoid of that which is absolutely essential to a truly Christian life. How strange a thing it is that we are able to love One whom we have never seen, whose voice we have never heard, with whose form we have never been brought into contact! This is altogether at variance with ordinary human experience. For a great man who lives at a distance we may be able to feel a certain amount of enthusiastic admiration; he may be the leader of some great cause in which we are deeply interested, or his personal talents and character may command our respect; but can we truly say that we love him? We are living in an age in which not a few remarkable men have attracted public attention, and some of these, like the great Italian patriot, Garibaldi, have stirred our hearts to their inmost depths by their exploits; but while we have admired such persons, could we with any degree of truth have said that we loved them? No; to love them we need to be brought into some kind of direct personal contact with them. But here is One whom having not seen men yet have loved with a greater love than any earthly object. Truly a wonderful thing is the love of God in the heart of man! Indeed, no less can be said of it than that it is a miracle, a thing that cannot be naturally produced, a thing that belongs not to earth, and that can only exist here when it is brought down from heaven by the Spirit of Love, and planted, like a precious exotic, in our heart, a flower of Paradise on the soil of earth. In considering the story of this most remarkable instance of unselfish devotion, we shall find ourselves supplied with a very striking illustration of that higher affection of which I have been speaking, and from this we shall be in a position to learn some important lessons with respect to that life of love which should bind together the true disciple and his Divine Master. 1. And first we observe that the love of Jonathan for David seems to have been caused in the first instance by the act of heroism on the part of David which brought life and liberty to the thousands of Israel. Jonathan had sat by his father's tent, and watched the single combat on which the destinies of two nations might be said to hang. He had seen the gigantic champion of Gath march down with stately stride into the valley, and his youthful antagonist advance to meet him, and all the chivalrous enthusiasm of his nature seems to have been stirred at the sight. David has been brought into the presence of Saul with the head of Goliath in his hand, and the king proceeds to enquire his parentage, in order that he may mete out the reward promised to the victor. While the conversation is going on between Saul and David, Jonathan, Saul's son, is standing by, all eyes and ears. Interested from the first in this remarkable young man, he now feels his interest ripen into affection. He admired him at first; he loves him now. Consider the elements of this affection. There was an overpowering sense

of gratitude. They were all saved, and David was the saviour. He himself, more than almost any one else, was under the deepest obligation to the youthful hero; for his life and his honour and his crown had been redeemed. Had David been overthrown, and Goliath victorious, never would he have filled the throne of his father, and reigned over his people. Israel would have become a nation of serfs. Here we have our first lesson, which may serve to show us what it is that first kindles the love of God in the heart of man. We begin to love when we apprehend the first great deliverance which Christ has wrought out for us, and gaze with adoring gratitude upon the Deliverer. We may be interested in the character of Christ, even as David no doubt had excited the interest of Jonathan before the deliverance was wrought; we may admire the Christ as Jonathan did David, when he went forth to meet the Philistine; but love does not spring into life till the moment of deliverance, or of apprehension of deliverance. And even so is it with our Deliverer. The birth of love takes place in the apprehension of that which his love has wrought for us. But here much must depend upon the line of conduct that we assume towards the Deliverer. It is possible to check love at its very birth by averting our inward gaze from Him who has so loved us, and I fear too many believers make a false start here. I fear it is so with many of us who have taken Christ for our Saviour. We needed a deliverer, and we found one in Jesus. The revelation of the cross brought us peace and joy, and set our fears at rest. We rejoiced in the deliverance; but did we cling to the Deliverer? We raised the shout of triumph; we welcomed the happiness and the security and the immunity from condemnation, the freedom from fear, the hope of heaven. But what then? Did we turn from the gifts to the Giver, and fix our adoring gaze of loving gratitude on Him till all our heart flowed out towards Him, and our soul was knit unto Him, and we "loved Him as our own soul"? Or did we go our way, well pleased to reap the benefit of His work, but forgetful of the obligation under which we rested, and of the debt we owed? It is no use trying to make ourselves love God. All love that deserves the name must be spontaneous, and such love can never be generated by an effort of the will, still less by a process of moral analyses and introspection. Love grows by acquaintance with the loved object. Christ will become more to us than Deliverer. We shall love Him because of what He is, as well as because of what He has done, and our souls will be knit unto Him, and we shall love Him as our own soul.

2. Proceeding with the narrative, we observe the immediate results of the establishment of this affection. The first thing that follows is the making of a covenant between the two friends—a covenant involving reciprocal obligations, and binding each to be true to the other in all the various changes and chances of life. Not dissimilar to this is the order of events in the life of love between thy soul and its Lord. The act of Baptism, which in the case of the adult believer would naturally follow immediately on the acceptance of the great deliverance, brings the soul within the bonds of a spiritual covenant, involving reciprocal obligations. Remember, too, that the covenant involves reciprocal obligation.

3. We pass on to the next incident in the story of this great love, and we read that Jonathan stripped himself of his robe, and also his garment, even to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle. It is only in the school of grace, and under the influence of love, that we learn to divert ourselves of all that we naturally prided ourselves upon, and to present all, cheerfully and with an enthusiasm of devotion, to Another. Nor is this all. Jonathan makes over to David, what must always be dear to the warrior's heart, "his sword, and his bow, and his girdle." The very weapons which he had carried on many a hard-fought field—weapons with which he had performed already notable and splendid exploits. What is there you most naturally pride yourself upon, or if you do not pride yourself upon it, what faculty or quality are you most conscious of possessing in a special degree? Is it your intellect? Has God given you a strong head, and a clear judgment? Put the bow and the sword into David's hands. He won't despise the gift, but use it for his own glory. Has God bestowed on you the gift of language, fluency and readiness in speech? You are quick at repartee; or perhaps you possess a lively humour, and the dangerous gift of wit, and those qualities you were wont to exercise in order to gratify your vanity, or to make yourself highly acceptable to society. Let those lips of yours be anointed with the holy unction of the blessed Spirit, so that through Him you may speak as the oracles of God. Give Him the bow, give Him the sword. Has He given you wealth? Remember it is all His

already; but He gives you the privilege of giving it back to Him. Lay it at His feet. Has He given you influence? Consecrate that influence to Him, it belongs to Him. Do not let Him have to ask you for it twice. Give it to Him because you love Him. Whatever it is, my friend, that belongs to you in an extraordinary and unusual degree, these are the special presents that you are privileged to make to Him to whom your hearts are already given, and whom having not seen you have begun to love. (W. H. M. H. Aitkin, M.A.) *Love story of David and Jonathan*.—Now it is my purpose to use this beautiful love scene between David and Jonathan as an illustration of the love which Christ offers to us. 1. In the first place, it truly suggests that Christ, the Prince of Heaven, comes seeking a compact with us. Christ sees something in man, at his worst, that He loves, and that seems to Him worth living and dying to save. 2. There is another suggestion that is very comforting, and that is that as Jonathan's love prompted him to give his own clothes to David, so that his humble friend might look as much the prince as himself, Christ comes offering to clothe us in his own beautiful garments of purity and righteousness. It is the glory of Christians that Christ helps them to become like Himself. Our ragged clothing of sin and of evil habit is to be cast off, and we are to be clothed with goodness and gentleness and meekness and love and hope. That is the most glorious thing about Christianity. It is not that a man may be simply saved from sorrow and despair and punishment on account of his sins, but the sinner's nature may be transformed and he may become a prince of God's realm, a holy man. The drunkard may put on sobriety. And the promise is that this robing of the soul, this beautifying of the character, shall go on until, when we awake in heaven, we shall awake in the likeness of Jesus Christ. 3. There is one other suggestion here which we find also fulfilled in Christ's treatment of the sinner: Jonathan bestowed upon David, not only his own clothing, but he gave him his own armour and weapons. So Christ equips us with the very weapons with which He battled in this world when He was tempted in all points like as we are and yet came off victorious without sin. He gives us the girdle of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness; on our feet He puts shoes made of the preparation of the Gospel of peace; on the left arm we carry the shield of faith—a wonderful shield that is able to stop every fiery dart of the wicked one. (L. A. Banks, D.D.) *Friendship*.—I. THE CHOICE OF FRIENDS. The commonest advice given to young men on this subject is to choose their friends well. But do we really choose our friends? Like love, friendship may kindle at first sight. The instant you see a man, something within you may say, "This is the man for me. This is the man who is going to be the other half of my soul." "My friends," says Emerson, "have come to me unsought. The great God gave them to me," and I expect some of us could say that too. Although in the initial stages friendship seems to be more a matter of good luck than of choice, or, rather, let me say a matter of God's kind Providence, there are subsequent stages when friendship does need to be cultivated. For instance, when friends separate in Providence to live in different towns or in different countries, unless friendship is to lapse it must be cultivated by correspondence, and letters long unanswered are very apt to cool the heart of a friend. Or when other ties are formed friendship is apt to be sacrificed to them, as, when a man is married, he is apt to drop his friends; but that is a great mistake, because the home is enriched with the visits of friends if they are good ones. What is a man to do if he has been unfortunate enough to contract a friendship which is injurious? There may be such friendships. There are more instances than one of this kind, for example, in the life of Robert Burns, the poet, but one of them was especially influential in determining his moral history. One winter, chancing to be at the town of Irvine, learning flax dressing, a detail of farming in those days, he fell in with a young man rather older than himself, and much more versed in the ways of the world, for whom he instantly contracted a romantic attachment. "I loved and admired him," says he to himself, "to a degree of enthusiasm, and, of course, strove to imitate him. His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief." And the mischief turned out to be more lasting and decisive than, even at the time when writing this sentence, Burns himself had any conception of. Is there not something horrible in the name of friendship being attached to a relationship which is

undermining the character and threatening the whole future of one who is engaged in it. II. **THE GAINS OF FRIENDSHIP.** The prime gain of friendship is just the knowledge of a noble soul. That was what Jonathan felt. It is the man who has most in himself to give who gives most, not the man who has most of what is external to give. No counter gifts can altogether balance those which an opulent nature bestows when it gives itself. That, then, is the first gain of friendship, simply to know a noble nature. 2. The second gain of friendship is that it develops the powers of those engaged in it. History contains many striking instances of how friends have stimulated one another to the highest intellectual attainment. For instance, Goethe and Schiller, the two greatest chiefs of German literature, though differing widely in genius and disposition, both produced their grandest works when living in the same town and daily enjoying each other's conversation. And German history has a still more striking example. Just as Goethe and Schiller lived together at Weimar, so Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon lived together at Wittenburg, and their friendship did a great deal to stamp its character on the Reformation. It is perfectly delightful to hear Luther and Melancthon speaking about each other. For instance, Luther says on one occasion, "Philip is a wonder to us all. If the Lord will, he will beat many Martins as the mightiest enemy to the devil and scholasticism. I am the rough woodman who has to make a path; but Philip goes quietly and peaceably along it, builds and plants, sows and waters." On the other hand, the younger man said on one occasion, "Luther supplies the place of all my friends. He is greater and more admirable in my sight than I dare express." 3. Then a third gain of friendship is that a friend can often speak a good word for his friend, and otherwise promote his advantage. Flattery is the poison of friendship, because it is false, and it has always been counted one of the greatest gains of friendship that one friend can, without offence, tell the other his faults. An ancient Chinese philosopher says about this close friendship, "The heaven-ordained relationship, on which depends the correction of one's character"; and a very ancient Indian poet expresses this still more beautifully in these words:

The words which from a stranger's lips offend
Are honey-sweet if spoken by a friend,
As when the smoke of common wood we spurn,
But call it perfume sweet when fragrant aloes burn;

and the Scripture clinches this matter by saying, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." III. **THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR FRIENDSHIP.** Philosophers are too apt to speak as if friendship were possible only to philosophers, or men of genius. Thus Sir Thomas Browne says, "This noble affection falls not on vulgar or common constituents, but on such as are marked for virtue." La Bruyère, the French philosopher, says, "Pure friendship is something which men of an inferior nature can never taste"; and Charles Kingsley says, "It is only the great-hearted who can be true friends; the mean and cowardly can never know what true friendship means." If a man only be genuine he is quite fit for this relationship, and if in addition he be tender and unselfish he can give the highest pleasure in this relationship. It was part of the low estimate of women universal in the ancient world that the ancient philosophers deny that women could be friends. Christianity, however, has corrected this, as so much else, and we know that women are not only as capable as men of being friends to one another, but of being friends to men. I might quote such historical examples as St. Francis and St. Clara, or as between the poet Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. Is the highest friendship possible without religion? One of the most obvious and inalienable qualities of friendship is this, that friends talk confidentially to each other on important subjects. They exchange with each other their deepest subjects. Now, if the deepest subject of all is excluded—if religion is kept out of the conversation—must we not pronounce the friendship to be imperfect and mutilated? The most elementary dictate about friendship is that one friend must do the other as much good as he can. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *Friendship, a circumstance of holy youth*:—There have been certain proverbial friendships stereotyped on the social history of the world; those of Pylades and Orestes, Nisus and Euryalus, Jonathan and David. Certain similar features marked them all: they were in all cases the friendships of youth, of self-sacrifice, of heroic generosity, and of

perseverance to death. Another feature distinguished them. The friendship was in each case vowed upon the altar of boyish devotion. The boy did not mistake the character of his own disposition or the friend whom he selected; and the experience of after life confirmed and verified the choice of youth. There are many occasions in life in which the boy is not the best decider upon truth, and in which the decisions of early days and first choices are not confirmed by the experience of riper years. It is happily not the case with friendship. There, often, he whom we have chosen as the depository of our first conscious feelings, the chosen companion of the long walk on the school-holiday, the friend to whom we have applied in the difficulty of the lesson, is the companion of the sore struggle of after days, the accepted friend of the wife of our choice, and sometimes our kind and tender comforter when we are mourners over the grave of the wife or of the child. In the advance of onward years, the friend of boyhood sits by us when we are dying, follows us to the grave, places the tablet in the church or the inscription on the tombstone, and is steadfast at the last hour, as he was in the schoolroom, by the river's bank, on the play-ground and on the holiday. The love of David and Jonathan was singularly beautiful and true. 1. All boys have a natural tendency towards forming friendships. Such friendships tend to bring out the character; without them the powers of a boy will very often lie dormant and undeveloped through his future life. Up to a certain age a youth, though full of affection towards those who are the relations of his life, may be unconscious of them. For his friend at school, in connection with whom none of those relationships exist, he is able to realise love and regard, and in connection with him first becomes conscious of the power of love at all. The knowledge of this fact alone expands and invigorates the whole disposition. 2. The friendship of youth frequently ends in important results of usefulness in after life. There is something striking in the altered circumstances which in turn affected the sons of Kish and Jesse; and it was in these very adversities that each was so invaluable to the other. It is very hard to tell what our lot may be in future life. Vicissitudes, as untoward as that which lost Jonathan his throne, may affect us in our onward career; and fortune, as unexpected as that which fell to David's lot, may fall to our share. Many a boy is flushed with high birth or illustrious parentage, or has some bright promise of future position, which will elevate him above his fellows; but the possibility of a future change in the position of boyhood is strongly brought to mind by the story of Jonathan and David. But while this covenant was thus acted upon in after days, the covenant itself was a very striking and beautiful circumstance. Two young men, each of them full of high energies; ambitious, brave, and noble; were, nevertheless, so deeply conscious of their dependence upon God and the necessity of serving Him, as to bind themselves by an agreement of a distinctly religious character; thus evincing their piety and showing that the claims of God infinitely transcend the highest earthly employment. Such a thing is rare. 3. And again, there is something very grand in the long pause in the personal communications between David and Jonathan. They loved each other as boys and as youths. When David walked forth fresh and ruddy from the wilderness of Bethlehem, and Jonathan shone in all the lustre of the son of a great king, the prince and the shepherd boy loved each other. They took delight in telling their love one for the other, and made their covenant before God in the field of Ezel, and their souls were satisfied. They saw each other no more in the passage of years. Indeed, David's eye rested not on the countenance of his friend until it was brought a corpse from the streets of Bethshan. Trouble of all kinds marked the interval. Nevertheless, all this sufficed not to shake the foundations of Jonathan's love for David. It is a very poor and narrow view, to imagine that real friendship should need constant expression. It is a deep, wide, lasting thing, whose seed is sown, as in some cases, in the period of boyhood, and may spring up into a plant which may shadow a long-after day, though the interval that elapses between the ratification of that friendship and the hour of death, may be marked by a long suspension of intercourse: aye! and even by circumstances. 4. Another lesson that we learn from the friendship of these two youths is, that true friendship exists in a desire to discover points of beauty and nobility in everything, however otherwise defective or polluted. Through the outward circumstance of a lineage opposed to the present and future interest of David, he was able to perceive, to value, and to love the noble qualities of Jonathan. While in the shepherd boy, whose

destiny had been already declared by an unerring voice to be one which would finally eclipse the bouse of Saul, Jonathan was able to see the lustre of those qualities which eventually made David "the sweet psalmist of Israel" and "the man after God's own heart;" and seeing them, he had the disinterestedness to love them, and to ally himself to them. (*E. Monro.*) *Friendship*:—How dreary would this world be if there were no friendships in it, if no heart union between man and man, husband and wife, parent and child, young man and maiden. How narrow must be the soul of that man who has never known what it is to be absorbed in someone else, so absorbed, that the mention of the name of that one will cause a peculiar thrill of joy. How sad to care only for oneself. How woeful to be uncared for. Miserable the state of one represented as saying, "There's not much to live for. I don't suppose I have a friend in all the world." Still sadder to me is the one who replied, "If you have no friend, you have nobody to borrow money of you; nobody to call when you are in the middle of an interesting book; nobody to tell stories about you to other people; nobody, in short, to bore you before your face and abuse you behind your back." That was a cynical view of a selfish man, of one who never could have tasted the sweets of a real friendship or the magnetic power of love. David drew Jonathan and held him as the magnet does steel filings. You cannot see the subtle power that attracts, but it is there. It is a mystery in evidence. I. *FRIENDSHIP THROUGH RESPECT*. Love blazed up towards David very suddenly. Still, it was love, founded on respect. With some love may be more slowly kindled, but may die very hardly. Love at first sight is a possibility, and a constantly-renewed experience in this old world. Thank God that romance is not yet banished from the earth. In some nations affections are more kept under control than in England; marriages are made to depend on the amount of the dowry. Harmony of taste and principle characterised the friendship of the son of Saul and the son of Jesse. There was true piety in both. There is little prospect of happiness in any union without piety. First impressions are not always right. We may not always follow them. Reciprocal was the affection between Israel's prince and its future "sweet singer." Sometimes a man may care for one who cares nothing for him. Many a maiden, too, has given affection to one who may not really have had a serious thought about returning it. Imagination can throw round another a glamour of qualities he or she may not possess. People do not always meet with a return of affection. And yet some are as greedy of it as the eucalyptus is of water. Affection should beget affection, but it is not always successful in the transfer. Even when Christ loved with an infinite and Divine love it has not always found a response in souls. II. *DISCRIMINATING FRIENDSHIP*. Seneca tells of a distinguished citizen of Rome who introduced the fashion of separating his visitors. Some were left in hall or court, others were admitted to the antechamber, and others were led into the boudoir of privacy and rest. To-day some are acquaintances of the street, others of the church, and others of the home. A sensible man will know how to discriminate. He will not carry his "heart on his sleeve." He will not be like bill distributors who thrust their papers into anybody's hands. He will find an intensified interest in the special affection he has for one of like mind to himself. 1. *Unreservedness and unsuspiciousness* will be found in a true friendship. A Jonathan will pour out his admiration and affection to a David. He will have nothing to hide. There will be free interchange of feeling. When danger threatens one the other will be alive to it. Faithfulness in a friend is promoted by absolute trust. But let me here say that this absolute trust should not lead to presumings. Some are always ready to act as if the surest signs of friendship were found in free comments on conduct. 2. *Disinterested and ready to bestow* will be the attitude of a true friend. A Jonathan gives his bow and his robes to David. For him he foregoes his claim to a kingdom. He esteems the friendship of David of greater worth than a crown. How suggestive of that Divine love that gave up majesty, glory, heaven's rest, for reviling, rejection, mocking, scourging, loneliness, and death, even the death of the cross for sinners such as ourselves. 3. *Unchangeable and unwavering* to the end will a true friendship be. Some friendships are like the strings of musical instruments that snap so easily when there is an alteration in the temperature. III. *THE TEST OF FRIENDSHIP*. Adversity is a test of faithfulness. When a man is prosperous he will have many friends. They will flock around, bend heads, and bow bodies. Let the tide of prosperity, however, turn, and many will rapidly fade from

vision, having wind and tide in their favour as they speed away. One said, "Early fruits rot soon," so friendships too rapidly ripened. Gushing protestations are often followed by tantalising flirtations and bitter and cruel estrangements. Trifling is the death of friendship. Not so was it with David and Jonathan. What misery can be wrought into hearts and homes by those who are unfaithful, and who are not worthy the sacred name of friend! Such bitter experiences were unknown to David and Jonathan. They were faithful to each other right to the end. David would have readily died for Jonathan if he could. (*F. Hastings.*)

Jonathan:—In heaven's vault there are what are known as binary stars, each probably a sun, with its attendant train of worlds, revolving around a common centre, but blending their rays so that they reach the watcher's eye as one clear beam of light. So do twin-souls find the centre of their orbit in each other; and there is nothing in the annals of human affection nobler than the bond of such a love between two pure, high-minded and noble men, whose love passes that of women. Such love was celebrated in ancient classic story, and has made the names of Damon and Pythias proverbial. It has also enriched the literature of modern days in the love of a Hallam and a Tennyson. But nowhere is it more fragrant than on the pages that contain the memorials of the love of Jonathan and David.

I. CONSIDER THE QUALITIES OF THIS FRIEND whom Jehovah chose for the moulding of the character of his beloved; and then be prepared to surrender to his care the choice of your most intimate associates. He knows what your temperament needs, and where to find the companion who shall strengthen you when weak, and develop latent unknown qualities.

1. He was every inch a man. In true friendship there must be a similarity of tastes and interests. The prime condition of two men walking together is that they should be agreed. And the bond of a common manliness knit these twin souls from the first. Jonathan was every inch a man; as dexterous with the bow as his friend with the sling.

2. He was withal very sensitive and tender. It is the fashion in some quarters to emphasise the qualities supposed to be specially characteristic of men—those of strength, courage, endurance—to the undervaluing of the tenderer graces more often associated with women. But in every true man there must be a touch of woman, as there was in the ideal Man, the Lord Jesus. There should be strength and sweetness, courage and sympathy; the oak and the vine, the rock and the moss that covers it with its soft green mantle.

3. Jonathan had a marvellous power of affection. He loved David as himself; he was prepared to surrender without a pang his succession to his father's throne, if only he might be next to his friend; his was the love that expresses itself in tender embraces and tears, that must have response from the object of its choice. We judge a man by his friends, and the admiration he excites in them. Much is said of the union of opposites, and it is well when one is rich where the other is poor; but the deepest love must be between those whose natures are close akin.

4. He was distinctly religious. He must be strong who would strengthen another; he must have God, and be in God, who would give the consolations of God to his brother; and we can easily understand how the anguish of Jonathan's soul, torn before filial devotion to his father and his love to his friend, must have driven him back to those resources of the Divine nature, which are the only solace of men whose lives have been cast in the same fiery crucible.

II. CONSIDER THE CONFLICT OF JONATHAN'S LIFE. He was devoted to his father. He was always found associated with that strange dark character, melancholy to madness, the prey of evil spirits, and yet so keenly susceptible to music, and so quick to respond to the appeal of chivalry, patriotism, and generous feeling; resembling some mountain lake, alternately mirroring mountains and skies, and swept by dark storms. Father and son were together in life, as they were "undivided in death." When he woke up to find how truly he loved David, a new difficulty entered his life. Not outwardly, because, though Saul eyed David with jealousy, there was no open rupture. David went in and out of the palace, was in a position of trust, and was constantly at hand for the intercourse for which each yearned. But when the flames of hostility, long smouldering in Saul's heart, broke forth, the true anguish of his life began. On the one hand, his duty as son and subject held him to his father, though he knew his father was doomed, and that union with him meant disaster to himself; on the other hand, all his heart cried out for David. His love for David made him eager to promote reconciliation between his father and his friend. It was only when repeated failure had proved the fruitlessness of his dream that he abandoned it; and then the thought must have sug-

gested itself to him: Why not extricate yourself from this sinking ship while there is time? Why not join your fortunes with his whom God hath chosen? The new fair kingdom of the future is growing up around him—identify yourself with it, though it be against your father. The temptation was specious and masterful, but it fell blunt and ineffectual at his feet. Stronger than the ties of human love were those of duty, sonship, loyalty to God's anointed king; and in some supreme moment he turned his back on the appeal of his heart, and elected to stand beside his father. From that choice he never flinched. When David departed whither he would, Jonathan went back to the city. It was one of the grandest exhibitions of the triumph of principle over passion, of duty over inclination, that the annals of history record. Jonathan died as a hero; not only because of his prowess in battle with his country's foes, but because of his victory over the strongest passion of the human heart, the love of a strong man, in which were blended the strands of a common religion, a common enthusiasm for all that was good and right. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The attachment of Jonathan and David*:—I. THE FIRST PARTICULAR BELONGING TO THIS REMARKABLE AND MOST INTERESTING ATTACHMENT, WAS ITS SUDDEN FORMATION. It was from predisposition that this friendship so suddenly arose; from the possession and exhibition of modesty, piety, and courage, that it derived its strength and ardour, and finally its permanence. And all this will, in a great degree, account for the otherwise strange mutability, which we observe in human affections. History, poetry, society, are all eloquent in praise of friendship; yet when we look for such an affection, and tax memory and observation on the question, all we have is an account of sudden or violent attachment, formed upon fancy, and not upon predisposition; of friendships as rapidly dissolved as they are raised; oftentimes converted into animosity and hatred; more frequently wasting and decaying into indifference from their first enthusiasm, and seldom durable except when self-interest was largely and deeply involved. This is no slander upon worldly amity, for every man's experience will corroborate the truth of the account. II. THE ADMIRATION OF JONATHAN TERMINATED in his affection for David, but the affection became mutual. The friendship of the world, in its best form, seems to be rather favouritism or partiality, than mutual and equal attachment, something more like parental regard or patronage, than that which the word friendship properly expresses. This one-sided regard, this favouritism, has in it none of the advantages of friendship. He who has a friend, as old writers say, has got a second self, doubled powers, for good or for evil. In friendships, and we speak only of religious friendships, how many advantages arise to both parties! Their equality and freedom lead to the communication and increase of piety; to the correction of errors in judgment, and errors of infirmity in moral disposition and practice; to a greater facility of approach to God, and a steadier advance through life to his kingdom. III. IT WILL BE WELL TO THINK A LITTLE ON THE MEANS USED FOR ITS PRESERVATION AND PERMANENCE. These were pious exercises. Thus we read, that Jonathan and David entered into a solemn league and covenant of friendship, with every appeal to heaven to bless their mutual regard, and promote its effects to the advantage of their descendants. IV. THERE IS ONE FRIEND TO BE FOUND, ONE TRUE HEART, ONE FAITHFUL SOUL, WELL TRIED IN THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTIONS AND TEMPTATIONS, WHOSE PROFFERED REGARD, WITH ALL ITS ENDURING AND IMPERISHABLE BENEFITS AND EXCELLENCE, MEN TOO FREQUENTLY OVERLOOK. That friend, who, in Scripture language, is said to stick closer than a brother, and is a brother born for adversity, you anticipate me by naming, the Lord Jesus Christ. 1. Jonathan, captivated with David, stripped himself of all his robes of honour, in order to array him with these, as a proof of his affection—the overture of a covenant attachment never to be violated. So did Christ. 2. Again we are prompted to consider from this narrative the abiding mercies of the Redeemer. Our first acquaintance with Him (if we possess any) arose from His own gracious condescension. 3. On every occasion of intimacy we read that Jonathan failed not “to encourage David's hand in God.” This was the part of a holy friend, one who saw the value of better things than this world contained, and knew the value of such consolations and encouragements as religion—the true religion alone can give in our times of weakness, and depression, and suffering. Has it not ever been so between Christ and the believer? 4. Finally, we learn that it was never in David's power to requite the fidelity of Jonathan, save only in the person of his child, Mephibosheth. Yet him he sought out diligently, and to him repaid, as far as possible, the kindness

of his departed friend. Oh! is not this a stirring appeal to us in behalf of Christian gratitude and Christian benevolence. Our friend is removed from us, departed to make way for our inheritance to kingly honour. We cannot even pour out our tears upon his grave, or embalm his sacred remains with ceremonious sorrow. Nevertheless his children are amongst us, the poor ones of his flock—the despised and forgotten of the world. Seek them out, feed them, clothe them, comfort them, cheer them; this tribute, and this tribute only, will be accepted. “Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” (*C. M. Fleury, A.M.*) *Jonathan the friend*:—The absence of friends makes the busiest place a solitude; nor is there any vacuum Nature abhors more than that. She teaches us to seek a heart that beats in unison with our own; looks of sympathy and kindness; a bosom into which we can pour the secrets of our souls; when burdens press heavy, an arm to lean on; when our back is at the wall, an ally to stand fighting by our side; in our difficulties a counsellor to advise with; in our sorrows one to divine, and in our joys one to double them. This is so natural, and to possess such a friend is both so delightful and profitable, that, whether his home be a castle or a cabin, and he himself a king or a beggar, even though he was rich with the wealth of banks, and filled the earth with his fame, for a man to want friends, true friends, according to Lord Bacon, is to find this world a wilderness. The value which all ages and countries have set on friendship may be estimated by the honours they have paid to it, and the care they have taken to embalm the memory of those whose lives have afforded remarkable illustrations of what friendships could dare, and bear, and do. We have an example of this in the beautiful story of Damon and Pythias, where we see how it has filled the worst of men with admiration, disarming the hand and quenching the rage of tyrants. The first, a Pythagorean philosopher, was condemned to death by Dionysius; the execution of the sentence, however, being suspended in consequence of his obtaining leave to go home to settle his domestic affairs—a favour which the tyrant granted on condition of his returning by a stated day to suffer the penalty of death. The promise was given, but not reckoned sufficient. He dies on the spot, unless he finds a hostage—a friend who will pledge himself to die in his room. At this juncture Pythias steps forward; and delivering himself up to the hands of the tyrant, becomes Damon’s surety—to wait his friend’s return, or suffer in his stead. At length the day arrives and the hour; but no Damon. Pythias must be his substitute; and he is ready. Thanking the gods for the adverse winds that retarded the ship in which Damon sailed, he prepares to die, a sacrifice on the altar of friendship. And had fallen, but that before the blow descends, Damon rushes panting on the scene. Now the strange and friendly strife begins. Each is eager to die for the other; and each, appealing to Dionysius, claims the bloody sword as his right and privilege. Though inured to scenes of cruelty, the tyrant cannot look unmoved on such a scene as this. Touched by this rare exhibition of affection, he is melted: nor only remits the punishment, but entreats them to permit him hereafter to share their friendship and enjoy their confidence. What an honour it were to the Gospel were there many instances of such friendship among its professors! Why should there not? Has not Jesus laid this injunction on us all, “Love one another, even as I have loved you?” There is another, and almost equally remarkable, example of friendship told of such as never heard of Him who is the friend of sinners. It is so remarkable indeed that it procured Divine honours to Orestes and Pylades from the Scythians—a race so bloody, rude, and savage that they are said to have fed on human flesh, and made drinking cups of their enemies’ skulls. Engaged in an arduous enterprise, Orestes and Pylades, two sworn friends, landed on the shores of the Chersonesus to find themselves in the dominions and power of a king whose practice was to seize on all strangers and sacrifice them at the shrine of Diana. The travellers were arrested. They were carried before the tyrant; and, doomed to death, were delivered over to Iphigenia, who, as priestess of Diana’s temple, had to immolate the victims. Her knife is buried in their bosoms, but that she learns before the blow is struck that they are Greeks—natives of her own native country. Anxious to open up a communication with the land of her birth, she offers to spare one of the two, on condition that the survivor will become her messenger, and carry a letter to her friends in Greece. But which shall live, and which shall die? That is the question. The friendship which had endured for years, in travels, and courts, and battle-fields is now put to a strain it never bore

before. And nobly it bears it. Neither will accept the office of messenger, leaving his fellow to the stroke of death. Each implores the priestess to select him for the sacrifice; and let the other go. While they contend for the pleasure and honour of dying, Iphigenia discovers in one of them her own brother. She embraces him; and sparing both flees with them from that cruel shore. Both are saved; and the story, borne on the wings of fame, flies abroad, fills the world with wonder, and carried to distant regions, excited such admiration among the barbarous Scythians, that they paid Divine honours to Orestes and Pylades, and deifying these heroes, erected temples to their worship. But to illustrate what a friend has been, and friends should be, we have a yet brighter example and more certainly truthful story in that of Jonathan—at once so touching and so tragic. It finds its type in those rivers, the Rhine and Rhone for instance, which, fed by exhaustless snows, and springing into light in lofty regions, high above the sea to whose distant shores their waters wend, are rivers at their birth; bursting from the icy caverns of Alpine glaciers in full, impetuous flood. It has its origin in a very memorable event, and on one of the most notable days in the whole history of Israel. 1. The friendships are few that survive years of separation; the shock of conflicting interests; the drain made on our old affections by new claims; the trials they are put to by infirmities of temper, by plain dealing with faults, by a manly independence, by requests refused, by favours unrequited, by the rivalries of business, by the partisanship that springs from creeds or politics, and by a thousand other nameless circumstances. Fragile as the flowers the winter frost traces on our windows, there are friendships that a breath will melt away. It may be very wrong and very pitiful, but, as the wise man says, "a whisper separateth chief friends;" and who lives long lives to see so many, like leaves the frost has nipped, fall off, and the ties which friendship had formed, so often and sometimes so easily dissolved, that he comes to read with little astonishment, and no great sense of exaggeration, the words of one who, describing his relationships, said, "Though the church would not hold my acquaintances, the pulpit is large enough to hold all my friends." Happily, there are friendships that stand the test of time and the severest strain; but among these, what poet or panegyrist has recorded with glowing pen one to be compared with Jonathan's? It is quite unique; remarkable as his father's stature. The words of the poet may be justly applied to Jonathan—

"None but himself could be his parallel."

For example, men will praise their friends, but how few are generous enough without jealousy to hear others praise them, at their expense, in eulogiums they feel to be disparaging to themselves. 2. Then see what severe trials this friendship endured; and enduring, triumphed over. Saul's gloomy eye fixed on David, the javelin he hurled to pin him to the wall, the cry of his soldiers echoing from the rocks as they hunted the fugitive from cave to cave, and hill to hill, not more illustrating the words, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire," than the friendship of Jonathan did those which follow, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." The reed that bends its head to a breath of wind, and the old grey rock which withstands the hurricane that strews the plain with trees and the foaming shore with wrecks, are not more unlike than Jonathan where his own interests, and the same Jonathan where David's interests were concerned. Such was the depth and power of his affection for his friend. Here neither Saul's entreaties, nor anger, nor violence could move him. He would part with life to please his father, but not with his love for David. 3. If piety is shown by a regard to God and a child-like submission to His sovereign will, by taking up our cross and denying ourselves daily that we may follow Christ, by saying, like Jesus Himself, as He took the bitter cup of our sorrows from His Father's hand, "Father, not My will, but Thine be done," what finer example of this grace than Jonathan? David is to supplant him; David is to enter on the honours and fortune he expected to enjoy; and out of the ruins of Saul's house, David is to build his own; yet Jonathan ceases not to regard him with unabated and the tenderest affection. Tender as a woman, and yet true as steel, overflowing with generous kindness, utterly devoid of selfishness, trusting as much as he was trusted, with a heart that reflected David's as face answereth to face in water, Jonathan was the paragon and perfect pattern of a friend. 4. To make some practical use of this matter, I remark—(1.)

Everyone should seek and cultivate friendships. Man has no room in his heart to accommodate many friends; but, as God said in Eden, it is not good that man should be alone. Isolation breeds selfishness, moroseness; and these are apt to run into misanthropy. So necessary, however, is it for the happiness of man and the complete development of his nature, that kings, who are often required by policy to stand aloof on their cold, unenviable elevation from their highest nobles, have raised servants into favourites, and sought the pleasures of friendship in the confidence and company of menials. There is a touching story of a captive, cut off from human society and long immured in a lonely dungeon of the Bastille, whose heart, craving some object of friendship, found it in a spider he had tamed, and which his brutal jailer cruelly destroyed. (2.) In choosing friends, we should select such as promise, by the tone of their conversation, and by their moral and religious character, to prove friends indeed—such as we can trust in the hour of adversity, and would like to see by our dying-bed. Acquaintances are one thing, but friends another. (3.) We should seek a friend in Jesus Christ—the best, truest, kindest, surest friend man ever had. Everliving, everloving, and everlasting. Like summer birds which come and go with the sun, like our shadow which deserts us when his face is clouded, like fair flowers that close their leaves as soon as rain begins to fall or cold winds to blow, earthly friends may desert us when we most need their sympathy and support—at the time, and in the circumstances, expressed in the well-known adage, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." But such a friend is Jesus Christ. One of the old Fathers tells a parable, which, with a slight alteration, illustrates this subject; and, in view of an hour of death, and a day of judgment, may well recommend to our acceptance and confidence and peace and joy the friendship of the Friend of sinners. A man summoned to answer for his crimes, and called in question for his life, sought help of three friends he had. The first agreed to bear him company for a part of the way; the second would lend him some money for his journey; while the third undertook to go all the way with him, to appear in court, and plead his cause. So runs the story. In this man, the representative of a lost and guilty race, we see ourselves: and in the three friends whose help he sought, we see the flesh, or our fellow-creatures, the world with its wealth, and Christ, the sinner's Friend. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *David and Jonathan*:—Goliath's death-day was the birth-day of the beautiful, memorable friendship between David and Jonathan. I. THEIRS WAS THE FRIENDSHIP OF GODLY MEN. Enter into no friendship that is displeasing to Christ and that is incompatible with friendship with Him. And in reference to that closest of earthly attachments—which unites for good or ill two lives "till death them do part," let young Christian people see to it that they "walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise." II. UNSELFISH WAS THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN. The favour of princes has too often been secured by the designing and depraved; men who pandered to vice, and made more tempting "the primrose path" to perdition. Unsought, unselfish, was Jonathan's friendship to David. Here is a valid test for friendship. Is it unselfish? Free from rivalry? Able to rejoice at the growing prosperity of the other even while adversity is darkening round itself? Cheerfully willing to pass down from first to second that the other may pass up from second to first? How much of Jonathan's spirit is in it? The friendship that claims congratulations but is slow to congratulate, that looks for sympathy, but is reluctant to sympathise, or falls away altogether from the friend in his "dark and cloudy day"—such may be the friendship of the world. But how unlike the virtue that ennobled Jonathan, the memory of which keeps his name green and beautiful from age to age. III. SEVERELY TESTED BY ADVERSITY WAS THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN. True friendship can stand the test of adversity. It can not only live in the sunshine but can also illumine our darkness. When sorrows come; when all things seem against us; when men speak evil of us falsely, then we need a friend. A brother is born for adversity; and such a friend as David called "my brother Jonathan." IV. MUTUALLY VALUABLE WAS THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN. (*G. T. Coster.*) *David and Jonathan*:—After the death of Goliath all would seem to go well with David. The admired of all admirers, high in favour, beloved of Jonathan, and living with the king—whose state is so enviable as his? Yet let no one be sure of anything in this world, that is, of anything capable of vicissitude. David's sufferings and persecutions are beginning now when, to the outward eye, all seems brilliant and prosperous. God, who saw the evil coming, gave him the animating support of a dear friend. You will often see how a compensating element is blended with great

calamity, and neutralises much of its virus. 1. Put asunder by Saul's malignant envy, yet I suppose that the remembrance of that great surpassing love of Jonathan's must have been a presence and a power to David. There is no influence on a feeling mind stronger than the sense of being loved; nothing more elevating, more securing to the inner life. We are dearer to ourselves when we are dear to someone else. Danger, of a very subtle and fatal kind, lurks in the feeling, "No man careth for my soul." This is, indeed, the fruitful source of suicide. Youths are steadied when away from home by the confidence they have of a mighty love felt for them by their mothers. Is it not Jeremy Taylor who says, "He who loves is happy, but he who is loved is safe!" See how in the constitution of the family, in marriage, in children, in friendship, God has provided a shield for our weakness in the love borne to us. Jonathan saw himself magnified and improved in David, who was his better self. Read the fourteenth chapter to discern the valorous soul of Jonathan. Look at him, with one attendant like-minded with himself, "climbing up upon his hands and upon his feet" into the garrison of the Philistines. "And they fell before Jonathan," and there was trembling in the host: "and that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armour-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough." Here was David's adventurous spirit: Jonathan had seen Goliath for forty days defying Israel, and had not dared to meet him, but he saw David kill him. He loved that which went beyond his own spirit, yet was of the same heroic order. He saw in David a higher and greater Jonathan, the ideal of his own actual life, himself transfigured and perfected. What he had dreamt he might be, he beheld in David. 2. Now, let us turn to the father. Was Saul ever like his son? David, in his song, unites them in a very beautiful harmony: "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." And when we look at Saul's early history, there gleams on us a ray of his son's noble spirit. When "the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents," it is added, "but he held his peace." That faculty of self-control stands in terrible contrast with the utter loss of self-respect and self-government which he afterwards evinced. Moreover, the grief of Samuel at the Divine rejection of Saul ("it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night") is a touching proof of the truth that Saul was lovely in the early part of his career. Here was a noble nature ruined; but we must confess that his was a situation of such extraordinary difficulty that, while he could have retained his uprightness had he remained in favour with God, yet when we think of his constitutional malady, and of the human and almost necessary vexation which the song of the women must have occasioned; when we think that the praise of higher prowess was bestowed on one who was known to be the aspirant to the throne, as we learn from Jonathan's words to David, we cannot wonder that jealousy caused his ruin. There is no habit so easily acquired, so hardly cast off, as jealousy or envy. 1. We may safely affirm that, if you prize communion with God as your greatest blessing, you will be a stranger to envy. It is the presence of God with us which shuts out the base passions, or keeps them from having dominion over us. And let this be a touchstone to us all. When we feel the rising of envious emotion, let us alarm ourselves, let us be sure we are going back; we are descending to a lower level of the Christian life; we are satisfied to pass the day without a hearty effort to realise God's presence, and therefore has this evil come upon us. Cleave to the Lord, and all virtue, all goodness, all excellence in people whom you meet will be dear to you, because they are His gifts whom you prize higher than all gifts. Envy the gifts! How is that possible when the Giver is yours. Of the Giver "of every good and perfect gift," you can say, "He is my God." 2. This is the first great rule to show us how we may shun envy. 2. But, after this, get into the way of admiring worth, independence, and all moral excellence in whomsoever you see it. Love it in an enemy, and then you cannot have one. Sometimes we are slow to recognise high qualities in people who differ from us; but rid yourselves of this meanness, and delight yourselves in the discovery of nobleness, of generosity, of moral worth in books or men. Wordsworth says—

" My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;"

but what is God's bow in the clouds for beauty compared to God's gift of genius,

of wisdom, of disinterestedness, of charity, when in our human life they arch heaven and earth with a glory "that fadeth not away?" The nobility of Jonathan's character cannot easily be over-estimated. (*B. Kent, M.A.*) *Our social relationships*:—I. THE INTIMATE FRIENDSHIPS OF LIFE. 1. Friendships spring up often, we can hardly explain why, but they are most real, most helpful, very precious, and frequently lasting. It is an unspeakably blessed thing to have a true friend in whose wisdom you can confide, in whose strength you can shelter your weakness, whose sympathy understands the ever-varying moods of your soul. 2. Advise as to how to obtain and to retain friendship could not be more forcibly given than in the words, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." All expressions of confidence and affection are not to be on one side only; they must be mutual. 3. Our companionships bear testimony to our natures and our convictions. For friendship as I understand it does not consist in the perpetual interchange of compliments and sweet flatteries, but in the endeavour to increase the goodness and the happiness of each other, and sometimes this can be done only by gentle reproof and warning. It is a delicate task, and not unfrequently a most painful and hazardous one. Yet, as one truly says, the best of friends are "they that deny themselves of pleasure for the sake of making me better; they that incur the risk of anger and dislocation of friendship for the sake of telling me a truth that nobody else dares to tell me, and that I die for the want of hearing; they that are more choice of my soul's interior and essential good than they are of my satisfaction with the pride and the vanities of life, and seek to be physician of my soul, they are my best friends." 4. The other characteristics of friendships are expressions of love and faithfulness in adversity. Do not expect to get all and give nothing—to have affection and confidence lavished upon you as though it were your right, and return none. Not so will you acquire and keep friendship. II. SOCIAL ACQUAINTANCES. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." (*Romans xv. 2.*) Beyond those dear and gracious ties we form with souls with whom ours are knit we are compelled to enlarge the circle of our associations, and we make acquaintances in a variety of ways, who never become our friends. Either because we know little about them, or are unattracted by what we do know, our intercourse is limited to those few occasions when we meet in social life, our conversation to those superficial topics which may be called the useful but not valuable counters that serve instead of anything more real or worthy. How many of such acquaintances most people can boast. We are familiar with their names, with some facts of their history, and we encounter them at houses where we visit, or are on tolerable visiting terms with them, but they never show us their hearts, and we are equally reserved. That is not altogether unnatural or undesirable. We cannot take the oaths of true friendship with everybody. The society in which we move is not to be lowered in its tone by our laxity in fashion or in speech. We are not to descend to the level of the standards which satisfy irreligious people, and sometimes are accepted by those who profess to be religious, but we must follow what is right even if it looks ideal. Those around us are gathering from our conduct what is true and pure and good. We mingle amongst various people, and our influence may be felt. What is wanted is a more intelligent conviction of the duties we owe to society, of its need of a constant purifying influence, and that we Christian men and women have a mission to raise its tone and elevate its life. It will be of little avail to stand away in isolated carelessness, or in a spirit of indignant asceticism from the world's life, raising an angry protest against its evil; we must resolutely carry the influence of our own principles into its life, and strive by all means in our power to transform and regenerate it. We are to be "in the world,"—as salt to save it from corruption, as light to guide, to beautify, to increase the true joy of it—yet we may not be of the world. (*W. Braden.*)

Ver. 4. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David.—*David invested with royal robes*:—From the days of Homer and the Trojan wars downwards, this has been the method employed by Orientals to denote the bestowment of dignity and distinction. Not more eagerly coveted is the Order of the Garter, or Bath, or Thistle among ourselves than in ancient times was the gift of royal robes. Any portion, indeed, of a king's wardrobe or jewel-box was greatly prized; but the voluntary donation of dress, and more particularly in the act of being worn, rendered the tribute doubly valuable. Whenever this latter occurred the cherished memento was transmitted

as an heirloom from sire to son. It was equivalent to a patent of nobility. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) We find in Homer a minute enumeration of the armour Ulysses received in a gift from Meriones, and in the story of Nisus and Euryalus, in the IX. *Æneid* of Virgil, there occurs a duplicate picture of that presented to us in the tent of Saul. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 9—30. **And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.—David's enemy—Saul:**—It is the enmity of Saul which we are to consider—its beginning, its rapid growth, its deadly purpose. The excitement of the war being over, the king has time to think of himself, and he is filled with thoughts of his dethronement; and the envy of David eats into his heart so greedily that his old frenzy is brought on again. On the very next day his heart grew malicious toward David; the evil spirit seized him once more. "Whether this was a diabolical possession or a mere mental malady the learned are not agreed. It seems to have partaken of both. There is too much of apparent nature in it to permit us to believe it was all spiritual, and there was too much of apparent spiritual in it to suffer us to believe it was all natural." This we know from the plain record: "The Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul," and "an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." So that, negatively and positively, the hand of the Lord was in it. And yet he was eating the fruit of his own doings—"given over," as Paul says, "to a reprobate mind." But Saul's hate has not abated with the passage of the frenzy. The direct assault has failed, but there are surer methods in reserve. Men are cheap now to the king, who sees his crown in danger, and ten thousand slain or captured will not be missed if David but goes down with them. Yet again he fails. David can wield a thousand men as skilfully as he can swing his sling, and the king grows bitterer still. Saul learns that his other daughter loves this brilliant young captain, and it is surmised that her passion was returned, else the spirited soldier had not submitted so tamely to his twice winning and twice losing Merab. Not to gratify the heart of either does Saul give his consent now; he hopes that Michal "may be a snare to him" and the hand of the Philistine may be against him." He slyly mentions a dower—not directly, but through his courtiers—such as a "poor man," skilled in fight, might give to a king, the procuring of which he surely thought would bring him his death. And his heart must have been filled with malignant joy as he heard that "he and his men" (his two or three attendants, not his ten hundred) had sallied forth to slay one hundred men. But "before the days were expired" back he comes, bringing the designated trophies in double tale. But why pursue the disgraceful story further? Each defeat but fans the flame to greater fury, and Saul soon throws off the thin disguise with which he has marked his deadly purpose, and openly "spake to Jonathan, his sons and to all his servants that they should kill David" (19, 1.) At length the sad end came. The life that had begun in such brilliant promise was closed by self-destruction. His enmity was fruitless, except in bitterness to himself and trouble to Israel. It could not set aside the plans of the Almighty: "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure." These are the practical lessons which the unrelenting enmity of Saul suggests. (1.) Beware of jealousy. "Let the misery Saul brought upon himself remind us what a magazine of self-torture every human spirit contains;" and no single disposition of the soul is more likely to touch off the magazine, and make of the "heart a hell of wildest disorder and ever-dripping woe," than the disposition of envy, jealousy, and revenge. Jealousy may lead any man who listens to its suggestions into hatred as fierce, and opposition as malignant, and thoughts as deadly, and at last defiance of God as blasphemous, as Saul manifested. (2.) We are reminded by Saul's conduct how natural it is for a man to throw over on some other the blame of his own hurtful blunders or wilful misdeeds. Rarely, very rarely, do men go down by blunders all their own or wickedness springing from their own hearts. But for some other or others they had been standing yet. (3.) Saul's case may warn us of the great danger of becoming embittered and revengeful when going down in prosperity and losing influence and honour. Men rarely stay long at the top. There is an established system of rotation in the universe as regards the tenure of its high places. Men may come down when at the height of their powers and opportunity, or they may stay up till waning powers tell them another must take the place. A blunder may give the start, or the scheming of others may do the work. But whatever causes it, let the declining man crucify his selfishness, curb his tongue from bitter words, and go down gracefully, sweetly, clothed in the

kingly garments of dignified self-respect. (4.) As Saul warns of what may take men down, David teaches how to rise in the face of opposition that it would seem should stop our progress. He who fears God will have the favour of the Lord. (5.) We may see in Saul's fall and David's rise that God cannot be thwarted in His purposes. In spite of Saul's javelin, in spite of Saul's wily scheming, in spite of his pursuing warriors, in spite of the fierceness of the Philistines, he was chosen of the Lord and must take the crown. "Now, therefore, kings, be wise; be taught, ye judges of the earth;" "The Lord reigneth;" "He puts down one, and sets another up." (*T. H. Hanna, D.D.*) *The wicked jealous of the good*:—The incident teaches three things respecting good and bad men. I. **THE WICKED ARE OFTEN JEALOUS OF A GOOD MAN'S POPULARITY.** "And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him." Saul's behaviour to David reveals the progress of jealousy in four stages. 1. There is anger. "He was wroth." 2. There is envy. "And Saul eyed him from that day." 3. There is madness. "The evil spirit from God came upon him." 4. There is murder. "And Saul cast the javelin: for he said, I will smite David even to the wall." It is a sure sign that the Spirit of God has left a man when he is jealous of his benefactor. Jealousy is a foolish passion, and inflicts self-injury. Jealousy is a wicked passion, and displeasing to God. Jealousy is a dangerous passion, and leads to the most fatal issues. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand against envy?" II. **THE WICKED ARE OFTEN TERRIFIED BY A GOOD MAN'S SECURITY.** "And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul." Sin makes a man a coward. "'Tis doing wrong creates such fears as these, renders us jealous, and destroys our peace." Saul's fear led to the adoption of the most desperate measures to ruin David. 1. Saul resolves to dismiss David. "Therefore Saul removed David from him, and made him his captain over a thousand." Saul wished to prevent David from gaining the affections of the courtiers, and also to excite against him the envy of his subordinates. In both intentions he was disappointed; "for all Israel loved David." 2. Saul endeavours to provoke David. Saul's change of purpose in giving his daughter to Adriel was designed to wound David's honour, and excite his resentment. David had just cause of complaint, but he did not utter a word of reproach against the glaring injustice. 3. Saul determines to kill David. Jealousy extorts the most costly sacrifices—gratitude, honour, affection. A bad man will barter away his own child to accomplish his ends. Under the promise of preferment there may lurk the most deadly designs. Fair words may proceed from a foul heart. The face may beam with the light of heaven, while the heart is inflamed with the passions of hell. III. **THE WICKED ARE OFTEN DEFEATED BY A GOOD MAN'S VALOUR.** 1. In this encounter David fulfils the king's stipulation. 2. In this encounter David thwarts the king's purpose. 3. In this encounter David wins the king's daughter. God can make the impediments that are thrown in the way of His children aids to their progress. The subtle and deadly designs of our enemies are among the ordained purposes of God. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *Saul's evil eye*:—I. SAUL'S ENVY. Selfishness, that "root of bitterness" filled him. And from it there sprang the baleful poison-breathing blossom, envy. What a sin is this! Men "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," but no pleasure in this—of all sins the most hateful. It is vexed at another's good. It sickens to hear another praised. Base, it

"Withers at another's joy,
And hates the excellence it cannot reach."

"Envy hath no holidays." Where it enters it poisons life. "It is a very hell above ground." Let us beware. Let us not in this thing give place to the devil, but resist him. This Book has solemn warnings enough against this abominable sin. The first death in our world was brought about by it, when Cain, "the devil's patriarch," as an old writer calls him, "laid his cruel club on the innocent head of his brother Abel." It was the sin of Joseph's brethren. "The patriarchs," says St. Stephen, "moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." It was the sin of Korah, who envied Moses, and of Ahab, who envied Naboth. And the crowning crime of history is put to its account, for the Pharisees for envy delivered our Lord to death. II. **MICHAEL'S DECEPTION.** There was no need for the deception. It showed her distrust of God. It was wrong, and it led to a lie against the very man she loved. Better to die than to lie. You might as well steal from the rich to help the poor, as to seek by lies to help another. Trust in

God and do the right and speak the right. Men may extenuate their falsehoods and call them white lies and "grey fibs." But God truths away the epithets. He will not acknowledge them. He bids us speak truth one to another. He declares that lying lips are an abomination to Him; that "a lying tongue is but for a moment;" that "all liars" will be excluded from the Heavenly and Eternal City of Truth and Glory. III. DAVID'S PRESERVATION. 1. From bodily peril he was preserved. As captain of a thousand guarding the frontier—a dangerous service; as proving his worthiness, by deeds of valour, of the hand of Merab. As escaping again and again and again, the hurled javelin that sought to pin him in death to the wall. As watched for by Saul's assassins; how imperilled, how preserved was David! Not by miracle. Human friendship helped him. Beautiful, magnanimous the pleading of Jonathan with Saul on his behalf. There was a true friend who worked for him with the patience and meekness of wisdom. And who, "with word in season," shamed the king from his murderous purpose. "So far did Jonathan's oratory and David's innocence together triumph in Saul's conscience." Thus, for a little while, a debtor to friendship and its successful plea, David had peace. Wifely love helped him. Michal refused to be, as Saul had hoped, a snare to her husband. She warned him of the men of blood that lay in wait for him. She let him "down through a window," and he escaped. 4. His own valour helped him. Great had been his victory over Goliath. But more than this was needed. His alert and constant watchfulness helped him. When he struck his harp he was never so absorbed in the song as to be heedless of the king. On that javelin-sceptre his eye indeed needed to be fixed! 6. Yet the Lord preserved him. For these were but the means by which worked for him the Almighty Preserver of men; the God who had set His love upon him. 2. He was preserved from spiritual peril. He was unharmed by prosperity. With much to flatter him into forgetfulness of his lowly origin, to tempt him into the airs and assumptions of pride, he walked humbly because he walked with God. (G. T. Coster.) *The discipline of an anointed man*:—Keep in mind the undoubted anointing of David, and then see what untoward and heartbreaking experiences may befall men whom God has sealed as the special objects of His favour and the high ministers of His empire. Given, a man called of God to a great work, and qualified for its execution, to find the providences which will distinguish his course. A child might answer the easy problem: His career will be brilliant—his path will be lined with choice flowers—he will be courted, blessed, honoured on every hand. Look at the history of David for a contradiction of this answer. We shall find persecution, hatred, difficulty, hunger, cold, loneliness, danger upon danger; yet he who endures them all is an anointed man—a favourite of heaven. The history, so far as we shall be able to trace it, shows four things respecting the discipline of an anointed man:—I. THAT GREAT HONOURS ARE OFTEN FOLLOWED BY GREAT TRIALS. These trials not to be looked at in themselves, but in their relation to the honours which went before. Imagine a garden discussing the year as if it were all winter. Look at the temptation assailing David, in the fact that he alone had slain the enemy of Israel. Something was needed on the other side to chasten his feeling. Men must be taught their weakness as well as their power. II. THAT GREAT TRIALS GENERALLY BRING UNEXPECTED ALLEVIATIONS. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." The love of one true soul may keep us from despair. Love is fertile and energetic in device. See what Jonathan did. Love is more than a match for mere power. Love is most valued under such circumstances as David's. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." III. THAT NO OUTWARD TRIALS CAN COMPARE IN SEVERITY WITH THE SELF-TORMENT OF WICKED MEN. We are apt to think that Saul did all the mischief, and David suffered it. That is an incomplete view of the case. Saul was himself the victim of the cruellest torment. IV. THAT GREAT TRIALS, THOUGH CALLING FOR SELF-SCRUTINY, MAY NOT CALL FOR SELF-ACCUSATION. This is a point which should be put with great delicacy, because we are too apt to exempt ourselves from self-reproach. The question which the tried man generally asks himself is, What have I done? Days of misery have been spent in brooding over that inquiry. The question is only good so far as it goes. It should be succeeded by another—What is God doing? Imagine the silversmith in the refining fire asking, What have I done?—not knowing that it is being prepared to adorn the table of a king! Imagine the field asking, What have I done, that the plough should cut me up? We are strong only so far as we see a Divine purpose in the discipline of our life. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom

He receiveth." Let patience have her perfect work." We are polished by sharp friction. We are refined by Divine fire. Sorrow gives the deepest and sweetest tone to our sympathy. We should be driven mad by uninterrupted, ever-augmenting prosperity. Over every jealous soul the hand of the Lord is omnipotent. Look at Saul, and the case of David is hopeless: look beyond him, and see how by a way that he knew not the shepherd was being trained to be mighty among kings, and chief of all who sing the praises of God. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The great persecution*:—The king of Israel has fairly entered on a course of stern hostility to David. With the history of this ruling purpose his whole subsequent career is darkened. 1. The deadly nature of Saul's enmity. A less thorough tyrant would at the most have deemed confinement retribution stern enough for the crimes of personal bravery, prudent conduct, a happy successfulness given by God, and a high popularity with the people. But Saul's enmity, once kindled, could be quenched only by blood. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." With Saul, as with all tyrants in whom conscience is not quite dead, and fear is keenly alive, it was felt as a desperate necessity that he should proceed to extremities. And so he sought the life of David. Nothing lower would content him. And from that inner hall where the jealous monarch nursed his wrath, the pass-word went that David be destroyed. The persevering obstinacy of it. The proofs of this are mournfully abundant. It may be measured by the plans it contrived, the time during which it lasted, and the obstacles which it overcame. 2. The plans which it contrived. A device to make him fall by the sword of the Philistines. But how sad is the picture of an unnatural father sacrificing the domestic affections at the shrine of his kingly jealousy! Making a daughter's love the vehicle of vengeance on its object! A state alliance for mere political purposes is bad enough; but to make holiest feelings the slaves, not of public interest, but of private resentment, is immeasurably worse. He assails him again with his own hand, and sends secret agents to his house to slay him. He escaped to Samuel. Two companies of messengers were despatched in pursuit. Yes, from the very horns of the altar the relentless king would drag his victim. But a mighty interposition came from the invisible to shield the innocent. 3. The time during which it lasted. The usual calculations make it eight or nine years. This surely is too brief a period to admit of occurrences so important, numerous, and varied as the history contains. But assuming the accuracy of the estimate, how tenacious must have been the life of a resentment which reigned so long! Time, the great soother of strife, lost here its mellowing charm. The dark passion seems to have wrapped his soul in perpetual gloom, and to have become to him a second nature. 4. The obstacles it surmounted. The monitions of his own conscience; the high character and deserved popularity of David; the immense and ceaseless trouble, and the neglect of grave public duties, involved in pursuing the fugitive. How stern and settled that resentment which so quickly quenched all soft emotion, and craved still for the blood of the brave, forbearing, and generous youth. We shudder at a passion, so fierce, sullen, and enduring. We cannot help discerning in it the malevolent working of hellish inspiration. Saul's forfeiture of the kingdom was absolute and irreparable. It was emphatically pronounced, more than once, by Him who cannot lie. And yet this poor worm of the dust dares to plant himself in the way, dares to conceive deliberately the design of arresting that series of events, thereby to defeat the purpose of Him who is "great in counsel and mighty in work," and throw upon the majesty of heaven the ignominy of a conspicuous failure. Amazing fact! Language cannot express the enormity. By what name shall we call it? Infatuation? Madness? Impiety? It is all three in one. To attempt plucking the stars from their seats, or stopping the tidal flow, were not greater madness than to strike at him who is shielded by omnipotence. To blaspheme in words the sacred name of God were not more daring impiety than to offer proud and obstinate resistance to His will. To profane and prostitute thus the time, faculties, and privileges He has given is to make life one great oath. (*P. Richardson, B.A.*) *Looking for the black side*:—And Saul eyed David—that is to say, cast an askance vision at him; thought mean things of him; was sure there was a black side in him, and steadily looked for it. Saul allowed this looking for the black side in David to become a settled habit of his life. How sad the habit! And the seat of it was a mean, miserable envy. Remember those wise words which the wise Lord Bacon said of envy: "Envy is the worst of all passions, and feedeth upon the spirits, and they again upon the body; and so much more because it is perpetual, and, as it is said, keepeth no holidays." And this looking upon the

black side is not an altogether ancient failing. Some people steadily look for the black side in other people. This, as we have just been saying, became Saul's way. Saul therefore perpetually misinterpreted David. One is pretty apt to see what one is bound to see. "I have been in India for many a year, and I never saw a native Christian the whole time." So spoke a colonel on board a steamer going to Bombay. Some days afterward the same colonel was telling of his hunting experience, and said that thirty tigers had fallen to his rifle. "Did I understand you to say thirty, colonel?" asked a missionary at the table. "Yes, sir, thirty," replied the officer. "Because," pursued the missionary, "I thought perhaps you meant three." "No, sir, thirty." "Well, now, that is strange; I have been in India twenty-five years and I never saw a wild live tiger all the while." "Very likely not, sir," said the colonel, "but that is because you did not look for them." "Perhaps it is so," admitted the missionary; "but was not that the reason you never saw a native convert?" So it is, one sees pretty generally what one is bound to see, tigers or Christians; and if one is bound to see a tiger, even though there may be no tigers in his country, he can imagine one easily enough, and that, so far as he is concerned, amounts to the same thing. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *Pride of rivalry*:—Cicero's natural place was at Cæsar's side; but to Cæsar alone of his contemporaries he was conscious of an inferiority which was intolerable to him. In his own eyes he was always the first person. He had been made unhappy by the thought that posterity might rate Pompey above himself. Closer acquaintance had reassured him about Pompey, but in Cæsar he was conscious of a higher presence, and he rebelled against the humiliating acknowledgment. (*Froude's Cæsar.*) *Jealousy denies justice to others*:—Napoleon the First absolutely detracted from the merits of his bravest marshals, and was as jealous of fame as a woman or a poet; whilst Oliver Goldsmith used to fume and fret, nay, would ridiculously interrupt the company when he found the praises and attention lavished on his friend, Dr. Johnson, were too strong for his jealous heart. (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Cruelty of envy*:—Dionysius the tyrant, out of envy, punished Philoxinius the musician because he could sing, and Plato, the philosopher, because he could dispute better than himself. (*Plutarch.*) *Tyranny of self*:—The friendly biographer of the artist Gustave Doré says of him: "He never heard of any other artist's success without brooding over it jealously and unhappily. He was ever on the *qui vive* of envious excitement, and lived with the constant fear gnawing his vitals that any day someone might come to the front and eclipse him." So the sin of selfishness always in the end punishes the soul that indulges it. It comes like Herodias, a dazzling creature, yet intent on blood. There is no cruelty like the cruelty of sin even to the sinner himself. (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Envy the parent of crime*:—Cambyzes, king of Persia, slew his brother because the latter could draw a stronger bow than himself; and Caligula, the Roman emperor, put his brother to death because he was specially handsome.

Vers. 10, 11. **And David played with his hand as at other times, and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.**—*Harp and javelin*:—What a contrast! David with a harp and enraged Saul with a javelin. Who would not rather play the one than fling the other? But that was not the only time in the world's history that harp and javelin met. Where their birthplace was, I cannot declare. It is said that the lyre was first suggested by the tight drawing of the sinews of a tortoise across its shell, and that the flute was first suggested by the blowing of the wind across a bed of reeds, and that the ratio of musical intervals was first suggested to Pythagoras by the different hammers on the anvil of the smithy; but the harp seems to me to have dropped out of the sky and the javelin to have been thrown up from the pit. Other instruments have louder voice, and may be better for a battle charge, but what exquisite sweetness slumbers between the harp springs, waking at the first touch of the tips of the fingers! It can weep. It can plead. It can soothe. It can pray. The flute is more mellow, the trumpet is more startling, the organ is more majestic, the cymbals are more festive, the drum is more resounding, but the harp has a richness of its own, and will continue its mission through all time and then take part in celestial symphonies, for St. John says he heard in heaven the harps of God. But the javelin of my text is just as old. It is about five feet and a half long, with wooden handle and steel point, keen and sharp. It belongs to the great family of death-dealers, and is brother to sword and spear and bayonet, and first cousin to all the implements that wound and slay. 1. It suggests to me music as a medicine for physical and mental dis-

orders. David took hold of the musical instrument which he best knew how to play and evoked from it sounds which were for King Saul's diversion and medication. Why was it a failure? Saul refused to take the medicine. A whole apothecary shop of curative drugs will do nothing toward healing your illnesses if you refuse to take the medicine. It was not the fault of David's prescription, but the fault of Saul's obstinacy. Music is the mightiest force in all therapeutics. Its results may not be seen as suddenly as other forms of cure, but it is just as wonderful. You will never know how much suffering and sorrow music has assuaged and healed. A soldier in the United States Army said that on the days the regimental band played near the hospitals all the sick and wounded revived, and men who were so lame they could not walk before got up and went out and sat in the sunshine, and those so dispirited that they never expected to get home began to pack their baggage and ask about time-tables on steamboat and rail train. Theodosius, the Emperor, wrathful at the behaviour of the people of Antioch, who, on some sudden provocation, tore down the statues of Emperor and Empress, resolved severely to punish them, but the Bishop, knowing that the Emperor had a group of boys sing to him while eating at the table, taught the boys a plaintive song in which the people lamented their bad behaviour, and the king, under the pathos of the music, cried out: "The city of Antioch is forgiven." The rage of Achilles was assuaged by a harp. Asclepiades swayed rebellious multitudes by a harp. After the battle of Yorktown, when a musician was to suffer amputation, and before the days of anæsthetics, the wounded artist called for a musical instrument and lost not a note during the forty minutes of amputation. Filippo Palmo, the great musician, confronted by an angry creditor, played so enchantingly before him that the creditor forgave the debt and gave the debtor ten guineas more to appease other creditors. Over what keys of piano or organ consolation has walked! Yea, in church one hymn has rolled peace over a thousand of the worried, perplexed, and agonised. At the foot of the Tower of Babel language was split into fragments never to be again put together, but one language was not hurt, and that is music, and it is the same all the world over. It is a universal language, and so good for universal cure. When my dear friend Dio Lewis (gone to rest all too soon) conducted a campaign against drunkenness at the West, and marshalled thousands of the noblest women of the land in that magnificent campaign, and whole neighbourhoods and villages and cities shut up their grog-shops, do you know the chief weapon used? It was the song:

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

They sang it at the doors of hundreds of liquor saloons which had been open for years, and either at the first charge of the campaign or the second the saloon shut up. At the first verse of "Nearer, my Good, to Thee," the liquor dealers laughed; at the second verse they looked solemn; at the third verse they began to cry; and at the fourth verse they got down on their knees. You say they opened their saloons again. Yes, some of them did. But it is a great thing to have hell shut up if only for a week. Give full swing to a good Gospel hymn and it would take the whole world for God! 2. But when in my text I see Saul declining this medicine of rhythm and cadence and actually hurling a javelin at the heart of David the harpist, I bethink myself of the fact that sin would like to kill sacred music. It is a fact that sin has a javelin for sacred sounds. In many churches the javelin of criticism has killed the music, javelin flung from organ loft or from adjoining pew of the supersensitive. Saul's javelin aimed at David's harp. Thousands of people so afraid they may not sing scientifically they will not sing at all, or sing with such low tone that no one hears them. In many a Church the javelin of criticism has crippled the harp of worship. If Satan could silence all the Sunday school songs and the hymns of Christian worship, he would gain his greatest achievement. When the millennial song shall rise (and it is being made ready) there will be such a roll of voices, such a concerted power of stringed and wind instruments, such majesty, such unanimity, such continental and hemispheric and planetary acclamation, that it will be impossible to know where earth stops and heaven begins. Roll on, roll in, roll up, thou millennial harmony! 3. See also in my subject a rejected opportunity of revenge. Why did not David pick up Saul's javelin and hurl it back again? Oh, David, now is your chance! No, no. Men and women with power of tongue or pen or hand to reply to an embittered

antagonist, better imitate David, and let the javelin lie at your feet and keep the harp in your hand. Do not strike back. Do not play the game of tit-for-tat. Gibbon, in his history, tells of Bajazet, the great Moslem general, who was brought a captive to the tent of Timur. He had attempted the massacre of Timur and his men. Timur said to him: "Had you vanquished us, I am not ignorant of the fate which you reserved for myself and my troops, but I disdain to retaliate. Your life and honour are secure, and I shall express my gratitude to God by my clemency to man." Beautiful! Revenge on Christian's tongue or pen or hand is inept, and more damage to the one who employs it than the one against whom it is employed. What! A javelin hurled at you and fallen at your feet, and you not hurl it back again? Yes. The best thing you can do with a javelin hurled at you is to let it lie where it dropped, or hang it up in your museum as a curiosity. The deepest wound made by a javelin is not by the sharp edge, but at the dull end of the handle to him who wields it. I leave it to you to say which got the best of that fight in the palace—Saul or David. 4. See also in my subject that the fact that a man avoids danger is not against his courage. When the javelin was flung he stepped out of its direction or bent this way or that—in other words, he avoided it. David had faults, but cowardice was not one of them. What a lesson this is to those who go into useless danger and expose their lives or their reputations or their usefulness unnecessarily! When duty demands, go ahead, though all earth and hell oppose. Budge not one inch from the right position. But when nothing is involved, step back or step aside. Why stand in the way of perils that you can avoid? Go not into Quixotic battles to fight windmills. You will be of more use to the world and the Church as an active Christian man than as a target for javelins. There are Christians always in a fight. If they go into churches they fight there. If they go into presbyteries or conferences or associations, they fight there. My advice to you is, if nothing is to be gained for God or the truth, stand out of the way of the javelins. 5. See also in my subject the unreasonable attitude of javeline towards harp. What had that harp in David's hand done to the javelin in Saul's hand? Had the vibrating strings of the one hurt the keen edge of the other? Was there an old grudge between the two families of sweet sound and sharp cut? Had the triangle ever insulted the polished shaft? Why the deadly aim of the destroying weapon against the instrument of soothing, calming, healing sound, Well, I will answer that if you will tell me why the hostility of so many to the Gospel, why the virulent attacks against the Christian religion, why the angry antipathy of so many to the most genial, most inviting, most salutary influence under all the heavens? Why will men give their lives to writing and speaking and warring against Christ and the Gospel? Why the javelin of the world's hatred and rage against the harp of heavenly love? What has the Christian religion done that it should be so assailed? Whom hath it bitten and left with hydrophobic virus in their veins that it should sometimes be chased as though it were a maddened canine? Javelin of wit, javelin of irony, javelin of sourrility, javelin of sophistry, javelin of human and diabolic hostility, have been flying for hundreds of years, and are flying now. But aimed at what? At something that has come to devastate the world? At something that slays nations? At something that would maul and trample under foot and excruciate and crush the human race? No, aimed at the Gospel harp. Oh, I like the idea of that old monument in the ancient church at Ullard, near Kilkenny, Ireland. The sculpture on that monument, though chiselled more than a thousand years ago, as appropriate to-day as then, the sculpture representing a harp upon a cross. That is where I hang it now, that is where you had better hang it. Let the javelin be for ever buried, the sharp edge down, but hang the harp upon the cross. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Anger leads to crime*:—Peter the Great of Russia passed a law that any noble who beat his serfs should be put under restraint, and treated as a minor or a lunatic. Yet one day in a passion he struck his own gardener, who took it so to heart that he died. "Alas!" cried the emperor, "I have civilised my own subjects; I have conquered other nations; yet I have not been able to civilise or conquer myself!" On the other hand, the successes achieved by Marlborough were due in no small degree to his perfect self-control—a temper that nothing seemed to ruffle, whether the cause of irritation were in a military ally or a servant in the house.

Vers. 12—30. **And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul.—David's jeopardy**:—Saul was

afraid of David. This is most remarkable, for was not Saul the king, and David but the servant? There must be some explanation of this remarkable fear. What is it? It is the mystery of spiritual character, and that in very deed is the explanation of all the deadliest fear which paralyses the spirit of tyranny and oppression. It is in this direction that we should look for the greatest and best influences of society. What are weapons of war, or mere strength of arms, or largeness of wealth, or the whole pomp and circumstances of monarchy? When the wise man ceases out of the land the power of the land is dead; schools, churches, institutions devoted to the culture of knowledge and the promotion of wisdom, these are the strongest bulwarks and defences of any nation. Righteousness not only exalteth a nation in certain moral senses, but it throws upon the observing enemy all the force of a spiritual fear, because, in striking at such a nation he feels that he is striking at the supreme power and sensitiveness of the universe. 1. A new idea appears to have occurred to Saul, and one which would seem to be inspired by magnanimity. Saul now takes the course up, according to David military promotion. The object was to get David out of the way by sending him to some distant part of the kingdom on any pretence that might arise. The method is a common one to-day. No matter what honour is given to an enemy if the honour only take him away from sight, and break up his immediate local influence. Men should look into the motives of their honours, for possibly in that motive they may discover reason for humility rather than boasting. A humiliating sight it is to observe a man making an investment of his magnanimity and earning credit for being generous when in his heart he is inexpressibly mean. 2. David continued in his undisturbed course of wise consideration and noble prudence. There was no stoop of servility in his attitude towards the king, yet there was neither aspect nor tone of defiance. David simply took the task that was assigned to him, and wrought out its detail with wisdom and care. This is the way to treat every enemy. Instead of directly attacking hostility and so creating partisanship on its behalf, it is infinitely wiser to go about the daily task with simple faith and obvious wisdom, as if content to serve in the lowliest or highest capacity. Patience by long continuance constitutes itself into a solid argument. 3. The religious explanation given in the case of David is marked by beautiful naturalness. Wherever there is true wisdom there is always the presence of the Lord to account for it. "The Lord was with him," is not an expression limited to any one set of circumstances or one class of favoured men. The Lord will be with the least of us, and direct the way of the humblest of His creatures. Take nothing with your own hands as if by your own strength and skill you could accomplish your purpose: in all thy ways acknowledge God and He will direct thy path. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." 4. Saul being foiled in this direction betook himself to another course of conduct towards David. Saul proposed to further honour the young courtier by making him his son-in-law. In a tone of feigned cheerfulness the king said, "Only be valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles." How the Divine name has been dragged into unworthy and unholy uses! What is this but the most corrupt of all hypocrisy? For Saul said, "Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him." 5. See in Saul the true quality of malice: there is nothing too mean for it to do; there is no course too tortuous for it to adopt; lies, hypocrisy, cruelty, these are the weapons with which it will fight its way to its destiny. How Saul uncrowns himself in the twenty-second verse! When Saul made that speech he took off the crown and became a mean man. How deceitful is the action of iniquity in the heart when it will lead men to abase themselves thus in the estimation of their servants! It did not occur to Saul that when he trusted his servants with this commission he destroyed their confidence and respect in relation to himself. There might be no outward show of such distinction, but it was not the less a fact in the heart of those who received the king's wicked instructions. But sin is self-blinding. Again and again we have seen that the sinner is not only a criminal but a fool. (J. Parker, D.D.)

Ver. 14. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways.—*Wise conduct*.—I. THE WISDOM OF DAVID. The wisdom of David was shown by his conduct in extraordinary prosperity. Suddenly David found himself the popular idol; he was set above the king; but his head was not turned. 1. When Robert Burns was introduced into the brilliant society of Edinburgh—of literary men and gifted women, of peers and noble ladies, the titled of the land—when all Scotland

was at his feet, he bore himself as to the manner born. He was as gallant a gentleman as any in the *salons* of the northern capital. But his head, alas! was turned. His heart was seduced. The praise of men, the flattery of beautiful women, corrupted his simplicity, ruined him. He had poetic inspiration unsurpassed since Shakespeare; but he lacked the inspiration of wisdom. Under temptations far greater, David bore himself undazzled. The excuse has been made for Burns that he was a poet; he had a poet's exquisite sensibility; the exposure was greater for him than for common mortals. The palliation is admitted. He was more tempted than other men. But David, too, was a poet; he was a musician beside; he had the sensibility which attends both these Divine gifts; he had also the impassioned enthusiasm of a youthful hero. Yet his wisdom did not fail; because it was his mastering inspiration. 2. It increases our admiration of David to remember that he had no preparation for prosperity. Trial is a discipline for success. It has been usual to ascribe the wisdom of Queen Elizabeth, in the extraordinary elevation of her great reign, to the discipline of her exile in youth, at Hatfield, beset by scheming friends and enemies, dreaded and hated by Mary and the Catholic nobles, and only secure of her life by incessant and extreme circumspection. Such wisdom as she displayed in the long struggle through which England safely passed to such a pitch of glory was truly admirable. But this wisdom she might not have sustained if she had been taken to her sister's court and made a favourite there; if she had been put, with all her youthful charms and accomplishments, in contrast with the sickly, suspicious, bigoted Mary. Yet, even for this trial, Elizabeth had had a partial preparation, in being born a princess. But David was a farmer's boy. Suddenly, without preparation of any kind, save the native correctness of his judgment and the simple rectitude of his heart, he was lifted to the pinnacle of earthly glory. His trials came afterward. His success was his first experience. How few public men who have ever lived have shown such marvellous modesty and self-restraint! The example is a noble one for all young men. II. THE WISDOM OF DAVID WAS SHOWN BY HIS CONDUCT UNDER SUDDEN AND GREAT REVERSES. III. THE WISDOM OF DAVID WAS SHOWN IN HIS PURPOSE TO HAVE THE FAVOUR OF GOD. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The reward of religious obedience.* These words, "he behaved himself wisely," might be also translated, "he prospered;" and this version the margin affords; either interpretation would be strictly true, as applied to this period of David's life; and even afterwards, he may truly be said to have prospered, even although his apparent circumstances were adverse; for he was preserved in dangers and calamities to an extent clearly proving that "God was with him" in an especial sense, sheltering him by the presence of his Providence; and, in the midst of his deepest misfortunes and bitterest persecutions, his language is that of a mind absorbed in happiness beyond the control of earthly circumstances. In whichever sense therefore we take the words of the text, either that "he behaved himself wisely," or that "he prospered in all his ways," the observation will allow of being extended over that whole portion of David's life in which he was subject to the persecutions of Saul, and before he was settled in his kingdom. 1. Perhaps in no instance is the truth of the Apostolic observation, "the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God," more clearly exemplified than in this. God says, "David behaved himself wisely;" the world would say, he behaved himself foolishly, and discovered a defect of spirit. But of what spirit? Of the spirit of him who was a murderer from the beginning. There was no deficiency of courage in the character of David; this his bitterest foes must allow him. He did not conceive revenge at all necessary to his military reputation. He was totally unaware of that meanness which it is now the fashion to attribute to those who have the fortitude and high-mindedness to forgive. Even a wise and virtuous heathen has justly retorted this charge of meanness, and pronounced revenge to be the passion of a low, weak, and little mind. And if such be the words of Nature and the works of the Law, how shall resentment be tolerated beneath the Gospel? 2. David had sustained deliberate and premeditated injury; but frequently resentment is as groundless as it is guilty; your brother may have offended unintentionally and inadvertently; you may yourself, also inadvertently, have given him a provocation no less than that which is operating within your own bosoms; or, perhaps, he is even now stung with remorse and sorrow for his fault, and only wants the opportunity of repairing it. Do not forget that others have their passions,

prejudices, propensities, and habitual feelings, as well as yourselves. 3. David, during his persecution, was once placed in a dangerous situation. He had his most inveterate enemy within his grasp, and could at once have gratified revenge and shown his own security for ever. But he had no revenge to gratify: and security he sought from another quarter. Had the opportunity been offered to him again and again, it would never have occurred to him to embrace it; but treacherous counsellors are at hand, who would persuade him to sin and destruction. They knew that David was only assailable by religious motives: they therefore urge him with "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee: Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee." But David knows that what may seem good to him may not seem good to God; and therefore he takes not the advantage which circumstances had placed in his power. 4. We may also observe that the passage of David's life to which the text may be especially applied, when "he behaved himself wisely in all his ways," and when "the Lord was with him," was the time of his outward humiliation and adversity: and this may serve to show us that, although such a state as this is not good or to be sought after for itself, it has its securities: it teaches us to seek protection and comfort where we can only seek them with confidence, and in the same proportion it renders our actions safe. (*H. Thompson, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. Fight the Lord's battles.—*Aggressive work*:—The history of the human race is one of progress. Divine revelation has moved accordingly. The character of David is a sore problem to the narrow observer, because he who killed his tens of thousands drew his courage from a Divine fountain. The blame is thrown upon the fountain. A much more elastic view must be taken, and the physical regarded as the basilar of the moral, as the flint hammer of Spiesnen was the forerunner of the steam hammer of to-day. The prowess which slew the giant of Philistia has developed into a moral force which crushes tyranny, slavery, ignorance, and irreligion. As Saul said to David, "Fight the battles of the Lord," so saith the Spirit to the Christian Church. The weapons of our warfare differ, and the condition of our courage is not identical. The noble and disinterested Christian has taken the place of the lion-hearted warrior. There must be a determined opposition to every evil, and the war must be carried into the enemy's camp. When the enormous crimes of to-day are taken out of the calendar, and society so far regenerated that all shall "know the Lord," then, and not till then, may the Church lay aside the weapons of war, to enjoy the spoils, the dance, and the timbrel. The conditions of power and efficiency which the Church needs in order to aggressive work. The test question of the late Carlyle to persons seeking his influence was, "What work are you doing?" He measured men's capacities for that which they sought by that which they had accomplished. The fact that the followers of Jesus wield an enormous influence, and are doing a grand work at the present time, encourages the belief that they will yet do more. To extend that influence, and multiply actions, two things are needed, viz., the dedication of all learning, talent, riches, power, and time, which the Church possesses, to the service of Christ and man; and then the energising of all these resources by the Spirit of God, that they may become Divine forces in the salvation of the world. It is needless to say that this has not been done to the extent required. 1. There must be a deeper sense of the responsibility of the situation. The Master's injunction is, "Occupy till I come." See how it is acted upon in other spheres—the captain on the bridge, the soldier on the battlefield, the premier at the helm of the state, the merchant in the counting-house, the scientist in his laboratory, the artist before the canvas, the musician at the organ, the poet in his study, as well as the husbandman and the workman in their spheres of labour. They all occupy very earnestly their stations. Christians are the *dramatis personæ* who take the stage to show the love of God in Christ Jesus. Time and eternity alike demand the white heat of that earnestness which sacrifices all in order to save some. 2. There must be a stronger faith in the weapons of our warfare. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." In the hand of faith the sword becomes omnipotent. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) **War! War! War!**:—1. **THE LORD'S BATTLES**, what are they? 1. The Lord's battle is first of all with sin. Seek grace to fight that battle in your own heart. Endeavour by Divine grace to overcome those propensities which continually push you

towards iniquity. On your knees wrestle against your besetting sins. As habits appear endeavour to break them by the battle-axe of strong resolution wielded by the arm of faith. Put down pride, and sloth, and lust, and unbelief, and you have now a battle before you which may fill your hands, and more than fill them. And while this battle is being fought, ay, and while it is still fighting, go out and fight with other men's sins. Smite them first with the weapon of holy example. Be yourselves what you would have others be; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Be yourselves clean ere ye can hope to be the purifiers of the world. Let your testimony be unflinching; never let a sin pass under your eye without rebuke. Go ye forth where sin is the most rampant. Go down the dark alley; climb the creaking staircase; penetrate the dens of iniquity. 2. And even so must we cry against error. It is the preacher's business to preach the whole gospel of God, and to vindicate the truth as it is in Jesus from the opposition of man. Thousands are the heresies which now beset the church. O children of God! fight the Lord's battles for truth. I am astonished, and yet more astonished when I come to turn it over, at the want of earnestness that there is in the Protestantism of the present age. 3. And yet again, it is the Christian's duty always to have war with war. To have bitterness in our hearts against any man that lives is to serve Satan. We must speak very sternly against error, and against sin; but against men we have not a word to say. With men the Christian is one. Are we not every man's brother? "God hath made of one flesh all people that dwell upon the face of the earth." The cause of Christ is the cause of humanity. We are friends to all, and are enemies to none. II. THE LORD'S SOLDIERS: who are they that are to fight the Lord's battles? Not everybody. The Lord has His army, His church: who are they? The Lord's soldiers are all of His own choosing. He has chosen them out of the world; and they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. III. THE EXHORTATION. "Fight the Lord's battles." If you are the soldier of the heavenly King, "To arms! to arms!" And now, I will read you over the code martial—the rules which Christ, the Captain, would have you obey in fighting His battles. Regulation I.—No communication nor union with the enemy! No truce, no league, no treaty, are you to make with the enemies of Christ. Regulation II.—No quarter to be given or taken! Have nought to do with its pretended friendship. Ask nothing at its hands; let it be crucified to you, and you to it. Regulation III.—No weapons or ammunition taken from the enemy are to be used by Immanuel's soldiers, but are to be utterly burned with fire! Regulation IV.—No fear, trembling, or cowardice! Fear not. Remember, if any man be ashamed of Christ in this generation, of him will Christ be ashamed in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels. Regulation V.—No slumbering, rest, ease, or surrender! Be always at it, all at it, constantly at it, with all your might at it. No rest. I see sometimes the captains marching their soldiers to and fro, and you may laugh and say they are doing nothing; but mark, all that manœuvring, that forming into square, and so forth, has its practical effect when they come into the field of battle. Suffer me, then, to put the Christian through his postures. 1. The first posture the Christian ought to take, and in which he ought to be very well practised, is this. Down upon both knees, hands up, and eyes up to Heaven! 2. The next posture is: Feet fast, hands still, and eyes up! A hard posture that, though it looks very easy. 3. Another posture is this: Quick march, continually going onward! Ah! there are some Christians who are constantly sleeping on their guns; but they do not understand the posture of going onward. Quick march! 4. Another posture is one that is very hard to learn indeed. It is what no soldier, I think, was ever told to do by his captain, except the soldier of Christ: Eyes shut, and ears shut, and heart shut! That is when you go through Vanity Fair. 5. And then there is another posture: Feet firm, sword in hand, eyes open; looking at your enemy, watching every feint that he makes, and watching too your opportunity to let fly at him, sword in hand! That posture you must maintain every day. 6. There is one other posture, which is a very happy one for the child of God to take up and I would have you remember to-day. Hands wide open, and heart wide open, when you are helping your brethren. 7. Above all, the best posture for Christ's church is that of patient waiting for the advent of Christ, a looking-forward for His glorious appearance, Who must come and will not tarry, but Who will get unto Himself the victory. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 18. **What is my life?**—*The grandeur of life*:—"Who am I?" and "What is my life?" Am I only like some larger ephemera on the leaves of the green bay-tree of existence, born in the morning and gone at evening? Is the inner world of memory, conscience, and hope, only some mocking dream-land of existence? Are all its agonies of remorse, its stretchings-forth into the infinite, its feelings of accountability, only the workings of a diseased imagination? Or am I what I feel to be—a soul—an immortal soul—a responsible soul; having, after the close of life's brief stewardship, to give account of myself to God? Now there are really two questions involved in this text. The first is, *What is life?* The second is, "What is my life?" If the Christian ideal be a true one, if each man carries within him the grandeur of immortality, how am I acting with my own great nature? Am I despising and treading under foot my birthright? Am I weaving it into a vestment of beauty, or into a garment of shame? I. **IS MY LIFE A NEW LIFE?** Amongst the Hebrews the birth of a child was an occasion of gladdest joy. Its birth-day was a festival. So now "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." If we are in Christ we are new creatures, old things are passed away; old ideas of life, old habits of life, old associations of life—all things are become new. Another world has come into sight, as clearly as this world came into the view of the blind man to whom Jesus gave sight. I do not say the old life is altogether gone. No. The silkworm's winter skin clings to the moth until it is ready to spread its wings and soar away, and much of the old nature clings to the Christian till he is ready to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Paul felt the old man still clinging to him. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" So shall we. But for all this, the new life is there. We love prayer, we love God's house, we love to talk with Christ; we bear the blossoms in us of the better life—the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace. II. **IS MY LIFE A DIGNIFIED LIFE?** Yes! Dignified! Have we come to this, that we think ermine-clad judges, and purple-clad rulers, alone have dignified estate? Let me hope not! It was once thought a great dignity to be a Roman citizen—but there was a greater dignity. I am a man! sounds a deeper depth of dignity than I am a Roman citizen. Yes, and what the world wants just now is to feel this: the dignity of life, as life. Why the greatest physical wonder in creation is man; and the greatest moral wonder is man. Do you think if men and women felt this, that our towns and cities would be disgraced as they are by lascivious songs and dances at our places of public entertainment, or by debasing drunkenness, or by hollow-hearted profanity, which mis-names itself wit? Do you think, if the dignity of life itself was properly estimated, that men would not rather be bankrupt in cash, than bankrupt in character? Men would say, Think what manner of men we are; and pointing to the lofty hills, or the all-surrounding sea, they would say: these shall perish, but we shall remain. III. **IS MY LIFE A DIVINE VOCATION?** I hold, with Mr. Ruskin, that we were never sent into this world to do anything into which we cannot put our hearts. That is a serious statement, and not to be adopted without reflection; but I for one believe it to be quite true. Now let us remember that every honourable vocation is a Divine vocation; that circumstances and fitnesses constitute the calling of God, the voice speaking to us and saying "Son, go there." If we miss this, we shall come to artificial ideas of vocation. IV. **IS MY LIFE A PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY?** Is it like imprisoned air, that once released returns to the universal atmosphere? Is it like the tiny mountain rill which flows into the great river, and thence into the wide sea? Is it, that is to say, in any personal sense mine? Upon our answer to this depends our deliverance from all these Pantheistic ideas of God, which make Him the great Spirit of the Universe; all life being His life, and our own spirits only part of the great spirit, departing at death to its central source. Now the Bible declares emphatically our personal and unalterable individuality, and our consciousness accords with this. We are, in the strictest sense of the word, separate existences, and when we depart hence we shall be separate existences still. Any property we may possess, be it large or small, changes hands at death; we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out. But we do not lose ourselves; thought, conscience, memory, remain the same. I cannot change my life for yours, nor can you change with your brother. "What is my life?" Is it a dreary fatalism? Our inner life answers with swift decision, —No! Is it the result of influences which have helplessly overborne us?

No. The Spirit of the Living God has been nigh to every one of us. Had this poor man cried, the Lord would have heard him and delivered him out of all his troubles. V. **IS MY LIFE A REDEEMED LIFE?** It depends upon which side of Redemption you look at it. In one sense, all lives are redeemed lives. Christ is "the propitiation not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world." Christ "died for all." So far then as the Great Atonement is concerned, the oblation was for all. "Once in the end of the world Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." But on the other side of the Redemption comes in our personality again. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Faith then, as you well know, is the condition of redemption, and faith is the trust of the soul in the redeeming Christ. Surely we know whether we have trust or not. In human affairs it is not so hard to tell. I saw a diamond this week, and held it in my hand, which at the African diggings was sold for three thousand five hundred pounds; it had been consigned to an agent here, far away from its finder and possessor. Could that man, across the seas, have any difficulty in deciding if he had trusted his agent here? I trow not. And what does Paul say, "I know in whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him unto that day." Beautiful are human trusts—in love, in commerce, in friendship—there is poetry enough in human trusts. But there may be failure here. Alas, there often is! But Christ never deserted or failed the soul committed to Him. Never! VI. **IS MY LIFE A MORTAL LIFE.** Here again it depends upon which side you study it. On one side it is, "For what is your life, it is even as a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then passeth away." Yes! "All flesh is grass." Yes! "The wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." Sad enough on this side is human life. The fairest forms and faces lie to-night amid the clods of the valley. Tennyson's little May Queen sees the hawthorn blossom no more, and the Pride of the Village becomes the prey of worms. It has been ever so. The dark Egyptian beauties, the fair Grecian forms, the proud Roman damsels, descend to the dust. Pharos leave their palaces for the pyramids. Cæsars leave their purples for the same chambers that their meanest slaves occupy. There, the rich and the poor—the strong and the weak—the servant and the master—all meet together. Few of us like to think of it. The tabernacles we have dwelt in so long, teuded so carefully, adorned so constantly, and have come to consider part of our very selves—these must not only die, but become the subjects of corruption too! "The grass withereth, the flower thereof falleth away." And is this, we may ask, all of life? Did God introduce us into this world, where temptation tries, care wearies, doubt perplexes, sorrow burdens, sickness weakens, bereavement embitters—only to pass through much tribulation to the tomb! Oh! it cannot be! All the teachings of Scripture, all the promises of Christ, all the undying hopes of the human heart, tell us it cannot be. Immortality is the birthright of humanity, and though, during long ages the light of this truth burned dimly, Christ "came to bring light and immortality to light through the Gospel." My life is mortal—and it is immortal too. (*W. H. Statham.*)

Ver. 21. **And Saul said, I will give him her that she may be a snare to him.**—*Marriage an instrument of intrigue*:—We are not without examples in profane history of royal parents employing matrimonial contracts as instruments of intrigue or revenge. Antiochus the Great wedded his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes, King of Egypt, in order thereby to compass his destruction, though the baseness of the plot defeated itself (Delany). Saul, doubtless, in ordinary circumstances, would have violently resented the marriage of Michal; but he was artful enough to see, in the preliminaries to such a connection, a new opportunity for effecting his deadly purpose, and that, too, by a repetition of the identical stratagem and unworthy knavery which on two former occasions had been foiled. The thing pleased him, and Saul said, I will give him her that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*)

Ver. 29. **And Saul became David's enemy continually.**—*The evil of enmity*:—1. The possible doings of one sinful feeling. Jealousy was first awakened in the heart of Saul on that day when Hebrew females sung the

praises of the young conqueror of Goliath. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." So it proved. At that moment when the dark feeling rose to consciousness it might not seem as if the new guest were endowed with any special capacities. But it soon swelled out to a proportion which dwarfed and overshadowed all the rest. What tremendous energies of evil lurk in our fallen nature! If God judiciously let one slip, and cease to hedge it round with inward remonstrances and providential restraints, it will quickly grow to a tyranny beyond resistance, that shall desolate the soul, and sweep away before it the scruples of conscience, the dictates of prudence, the lingering power of affection, friendly counsels, and the pleadings of honour, interest, or decency. Oh, there are within us materials enough to make earthquakes and volcanoes of the soul! Let us pray that they be not "set on fire of hell." Think not that you are not in danger because neither Saul's circumstances nor special tendencies are yours. Jealousy is one of a gang. Envy, pride, lust, intemperance, love of money, are notorious confederates. They operate singly or in company. Often quarrelling, they are horribly unanimous in destroying the soul's purity and joy. O for Heaven's healing hand to keep them down, to preserve the soul in holy equipoise, to establish it in self-governing power, and impel it by restraining love. 2. The reality of an invisible power of evil. This is affirmed plainly and frequently. "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." The Holy Spirit who had been striving with him for good was provoked away. His deserted soul was occupied by an evil spirit. And how untiring! The foul and cruel inspiration was no passing breath. It prompted many efforts. It suggested many varieties of operation. It absorbed all other energies into one lordly passion. And all this is sustained for years, in growing power, in spite of many obstacles. How awful this persistent malevolence! O what shall break the spell of this terrible witchery? Who shall put an end to this terrible possession? What power shall awaken fear, and bestow a scrupulous caution, and inspire a holy ardour to be free from the galling thralldom, and endow with a holy strength to resist it and to shut up all those avenues of indulgence through which on-waiting spirits of evil issue from their dwelling of darkness! "Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "He hath destroyed the works of the devil." 3. The beautiful character to which Divine grace can frame the human soul. I suppose it will be regarded as sober truth to say that the world's annals present no parallel to the character which the great persecution develops in David. Whence came that marvellous self-government, which kept him equally from despair and violence? The power that girt up all his faculties was from above. Men speak of virtue and its endurance, of heroism and its daring deeds. Both are good—but in the balance of the sanctuary they are electro-plate, and nothing more. To be even ideally complete, a human character must have godliness as its central power. Practically to reach the highest level of what men call the virtues is impossible without the mighty presence of supreme regard to God, maintained by His own quickening Spirit. This it was that nerved the heart of the Hebrew outlaw with an enduring vigour that bore him on amid floods of sorrow, and formed his heart to a fortitude beside which the models of Greece and Rome look dim. Did ever Stoic endure so much with meekness so conspicuous? Did ever Epicurean show a sensibility so delicate and so pure as that which wept on the neck of Jonathan? Did the world's men of honour ever spare an enemy as David did the tyrant who thirsted for his blood? I trow not. Such triumphs of noble feeling are wrought only by heavenly grace. 4. The opposition between the Church and the World. It will not be questioned that Saul belonged to the latter and David to the former. Nor, on reflection, will it be doubted that this is the secret of Saul's irreconcilable enmity. The two are ranged on opposite sides. Grace would have quenched the smouldering embers of jealousy. Had the feeling not been rooted in an unsanctified nature, prayer and pains would have dug it up to wither on the surface. And in the bitter, impious and unrelenting nature of this persecution we may see mirrored forth in fearful clearness the world's irreconcilable opposition to the Church. The circumstances of Saul give us the advantage of seeing this feeling honestly displayed. He did not fear God; and as an absolute monarch he did not need to regard men. But, one way or other, the body of believers may count on meeting the world's opposition, aye and until the conflict ceases by the everlasting separation of the parties. Every step of her earthly way lies through a wilderness haunted by enemies, whose hostility is sincere and

operative, whether they strive to corrupt her like Midian, or meet her boldly with the Amorite. 5. God's benignant care of His people. To one who looked only on the surface, and took into view nothing more than ordinary human probabilities, it would no doubt have appeared a hopeless folly for David to seek escape from Saul. A private man against a king; a solitary man against one who had a nation's forces at his back; a scrupulous man, whose conscience forbade violent resistance, against a reckless man, under the impulse of an over-mastering passion. David's life lay constantly in the vicinity of death. He walked as if on a narrow ledge, over a frowning gulf. That he was "preserved from falling" is attributable to nothing but an over-ruling care which could not be surprised, defeated, or wearied out. Almighty energy, working in the service of love, wove the tangled texture of events round the living David, and secured his perfect safety. (*P. Richardson, B.A.*)

CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 4. **And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father.**—*The blessed Peace-maker*:—I need not tell you how fast weeds grow; your own gardens show you every day: and if you have eyes to look within, your own hearts will show the same sad truth. Saul's evil eye had now grown into continual hatred—he cares not even to conceal from man the murderous desires of his heart; and being disappointed, both in his own skill and craft, he now openly speaks to Jonathan and all his servants that they should kill David. Well doth the Holy Ghost testify, "Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse." "And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father," etc. "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan," etc. "Blessed are the peace-makers!" why? "They shall be called the children of God." And is this the grand family likeness? how should we covet it! Ah! surely if there is one feature that shines more brightly than another in our adorable elder brother, it is that of peace-maker. Do angels see their God cradled in a manger? it is as Peace-maker, while flocking multitudes strike up the new anthem which unites for ever the choir below with the choir above, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." Do they see their maker agonised? a stranger to peace? a man of sorrows? It is that He might make peace for ever by the blood of His cross, and proclaim peace to those who were afar off. Does He now appear as a Lamb slain? for ever making intercession? For some David He is pleading, for some afflicted one He is interceding. (*Helen Plumptre.*)

Ver. 12. **So Michal let David down through a window; and he went, and fled, and escaped.**—*David a fugitive*:—In this passage there is a minute account of an appalling danger to which David was exposed. I. GOD'S SERVANTS ARE FREQUENTLY EXPOSED TO ALARMING DANGERS. 1. This danger came at an unexpected time. David was now the king's son-in-law, a great hero in the eyes of the nation, and beloved by all the people, and yet Saul thirsted for his blood. 2. This danger proceeded from a powerful enemy. Saul was himself a formidable antagonist, but he also had many servants, watching to do his bidding. 3. The danger assumed an alarming aspect. The king's assassins had tracked David's steps to Gibeah, and surrounded the palace, and apparently guarded every way of escape. The dangers to which David was exposed are typical of the dangers that beset God's servants now. We are surrounded by dangers every moment. Many dangers arise from natural causes. Many dangers arise from spiritual influences: personal habits, social engagements, and Satanic agency. II. GOD'S SERVANTS ARE FREQUENTLY WARNED OF APPROACHING DANGER. Before God destroyed the old world He warned Noah, and commanded him to prepare an ark for himself and family. Before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah He revealed His purpose to Abraham, and warned Lot of the impending danger. Before Herod sent forth to slay all the children that were in Bethlehem, God warned Joseph in a dream, not to return to his own country. Before Saul

had completed his plan for the murder of David, "Michal, his wife, told him saying: If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain." 1. David's warning came from different sources. Jonathan and Michal warned David. Intimation of approaching danger comes in many ways. By dreams, suggestions, and Divine impulses. God speaks clearly by His word, earnestly by His son, and constantly by His Spirit. 2. David's warning demanded immediate attention. 3. David's warning led to decisive action. He listened to his wife and saved his life. Our safety depends upon decisive action. III. God's SERVANTS ARE FREQUENTLY DELIVERED FROM IMPENDING DANGERS. The context shows that God delivers His servants in four ways. 1. By friendly mediation. Jonathan's prudent and persuasive intercession softened the king's obduracy. God can touch the hearts of our bitterest enemies. 2. By personal watchfulness. Saul had made the most solemn profession of reconciliation; but David kept his eye upon Saul's javelin, while his fingers were upon his own harp. The enemy of our souls never slumbers; whether we watch or not, he watches. 3. By conjugal fidelity. Saul gave David Michal "to be a snare to him," but she proved a protector. "The devil is sometimes outshot with his own bow." 4. By Divine interposition. The path marked out for David was dark and dangerous, but God saw him, led him, and defended him. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*)

Ver. 20. **The Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.**—*The contagious influence of faithful prophesying:*—The prophet of former days was, in all substantial points, identical with the preacher of these. The commission both of prophet and preacher is to set forth the Divine Oracles; to speak to their fellow-sinners the word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. It is only an accidental, not an essential difference between the two, that in the case of the prophet this word is derived from immediate inspiration, while in that of the preacher it is gathered by prayerful study out of the pages of a written record. Nor, so long as the testimony borne by both is a testimony of God's Word, does it constitute an essential difference, that in the prophet's case the testimony should oftentimes be a warning of future and impending events, in the preacher's an admonition of present privileges and present duties. 1. A SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE EXERTED UPON CERTAIN PERSONS. Both the messengers of Saul and Saul himself were constrained by a strange and irresistible impulse to prophesy before Samuel. In this seizure and ecstasy of minds, previously bent on the prosecution of a hostile purpose, there was, no doubt, something miraculous, or rather, something that must not be confounded with the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit. But yet there were circumstances in the former which may usefully remind us of the latter. Saul stripping off his royal apparel, and lying down in the very dust before Samuel—what a picture does this present to us of the sinner's self-abasement, when the convicting and converting influences of the Holy Spirit first pour in upon his heart! How does he prostrate himself, in deepest humiliation of spirit, at the foot of that cross which has now become his only hope? A blessed and happy influence this, which has been exerted upon his spirit; and one, haply, no less marvellous than the impression made upon Saul of old. Of the latter, men said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" The spiritual character sat strangely and unwontedly upon this furious and worldly prince. So marvellous in men's eyes was the transformation, that "Saul among the prophets" passed into a proverb of marvellousness. And is not the result of the Holy Spirit's ordinary operations as much a marvel, in the strict and true sense of that word, as His bestowal of extraordinary gifts? II. THE INSTRUMENTALITY EMPLOYED IN MAKING THIS IMPRESSION UPON SAUL HIMSELF AND HIS MESSENGERS. In the case of the latter, we are distinctly informed that it was not until they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, that they also prophesied. What sight is so infectious, if we may be allowed to use the term, as that of a congregation of persons solemnly assembled for Divine worship, and joining, as with one heart and one tongue, in the sacred exercises of prayer and praise? Can such a sight fail—even if it make no permanent impression upon the spectator—of absorbing his mind for a season into the current of devotion? Over and above the associations of the place (which of themselves lend wings to devotion) there is a sympathy abroad—a sympathy recognised by the spiritual faculty within us—which lifts up the soul, as by an instinct, into unison with the song of praise

and thanksgiving. When we see the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God is upon us, and we also prophesy. Such is, we believe, the experience of every devout mind; such the Christian's realisation of the blessing annexed by charter to Public Worship, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (*E. M. Goulburn, D.D.*)

Ver. 24. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel.—*Religious enthusiasm, true and false*:—This passage brings before us three very remarkable men—Samuel, and Saul, and David. And this passage speaks to me of religious consolation and religious excitement. Now I ask you to observe that in the case of David there is no record of any agitation or excitement. It would have been little wonderful if he, fleeing for his life, had been overcome with emotion when he found himself with Samuel and with the servants of God, in safeguard. It was the servants of Saul that became excited, and then it was Saul himself showed religious frenzy. The son of Kish was one exceedingly sensitive to the influences of music and song. When his fit of mania came upon him the voice and harp of David wonderfully soothed and even melted him. We read at an earlier period, before he came into possession of the kingdom, that he met a company of prophets, and he too joined them. Years had passed, and now he was a worse man than he was at that day. His character had sorely deteriorated, but through that very disorder of his mind he was in some respects more susceptible than ever to a sort of religious excitement. When he came to Naioth he was quite beyond himself; the spiritual electricity of the place was too much for him, and he fell into a sort of paroxysm of enthusiasm. But he was no prophet. You may be among the prophets, and join your voices among them, and yet be no prophet. 1. There is a religious excitation or excitement which may not have any moral quality or influence whatever. It is not affected; it is real. It is not insincere; it is sincere. I despise the man who would play a part and pretend to be religiously excited when he is not. He is too base a creature. But I mean a person who really is lifted up and carried along with a rush of sacred enthusiasm. He cries for mercy, and he sings loudly of salvation. When he was alone he could not pray at all. He was carried along with the prophets. He had a wonderful fervour, his emotions were all aglow, and his brain was excited with a sort of sacred ecstasy. Now, this happens all the more easily if a man has a constitution accessible to such influences. I do not say that all excitement is useless, but I say that there is an excitement that only amounts to this. God forbid that we should for a moment deny that there are cases in which people get real permanent good. But the excitement is only the accompaniment; it is not the change. Excitement wears itself out. Paroxysms and ecstasies pass away. 2. The second thing is this: the degree in which religious emotion overpowers the body is generally proportioned to the ignorance of the mind, or to its alienation or estrangement from God. David joined the company of these prophets without any excitement or frenzy. I do not read a word about his lying naked upon the ground for a day and a night. Why was that? Because David had more of the matter in him than Saul. There was no resistance in David, therefore his body was not overpowered. But Saul was in an evil mood. He had come down to Naioth in a very evil mood. Envy and murder were in his heart, and when this pure sacred impulse came upon him, it met with the strongest resistance. If this is right, and surely this is right, this case should teach those persons who have at various times made a great ado over prostrations and trances and long fastings as signs of the work of grace, to be somewhat more cautious in their utterances. These things occur almost always in the case of a morbid hysterical temperament, in which case they are only a sign of disease, not of health; or in the case of a very ignorant person who is overwhelmed with things of which he has no intelligent conception; or in cases where there has been a very awful estrangement from God, and the Word of His grace finds an obstruction. There is a sympathy between the body and the spirit. They suffer together, they rejoice together. The body is not overpowered because the spirit of the man is open to the teachings of the Spirit of God. Mark you, it is Saul, not David, that cast off his garments in his excitement, and that threw himself in fanatical exhaustion upon the ground. If you reflect now and consider this, that this Bible is a collection of Eastern

books, and remember that the East has always been the home of strange religious extravagance, do not you recognise a new proof of the Divine wisdom that pervades this Bible, that it is really inspired of the Holy Ghost in its well-balanced sobriety of mind? The Lord Jesus, Whom the Bible sets forth as the Holy One, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners—Jesus Whom the Bible calls us to admire and love and follow, is full of the grandest enthusiasm. God was with Him. If ever there was a man full of Spirit it was the Man Christ Jesus. He was filled with the Holy Ghost, and went everywhere led by the Spirit, and at the same time full of sweet self-possession, full of meekness and wisdom, and so answered all questions on the spur of the moment in the wisest possible manner, and set forth perfectly the cause of righteousness. The Bible teaches us, and especially to be calm and fervent, fervent and calm. (*Donald Fraser, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XX.

Vers. 1—42. And David fled from Naioth, in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan.—*David and Jonathan*:—1. It will be suitable for us to dwell on the remarkable friendship between David and Jonathan—a beautiful oasis in this wilderness history. (1) It was a striking proof of the ever mindful and considerate grace of God, that at the very opening of the dark valley of trial through which David had to pass in consequence of Saul's jealousy, he was brought into contact with Jonathan, and in his disinterested and sanctified friendship, furnished with one of the sweetest earthly solaces for the burden of care and sorrow. In merciful adaptation to the infirmities of his human spirit, God opened to him this stream in the desert, and allowed him to refresh himself with its pleasant waters; but to show him that his great dependence must be placed, not on the fellowship of mortal man, but on the ever-living and ever-loving God, Jonathan and he were doomed, after the briefest period of companionship, to a lifelong separation. (2) In another view, David's intercourse with Jonathan served an important purpose in his training. The very sight he constantly had of Saul's outrageous wickedness might have nursed a self-righteous feeling, might have encouraged the thought that as Saul was rejected by God for his wickedness, so David was chosen for his goodness. The remembrance of Jonathan's singular virtues and graces was fitted to rebuke this thought; for if regard to human goodness had decided God's course in the matter, why should not Jonathan have been appointed to succeed his father? (3) But there was one feature of the friendship of Jonathan and David that had no parallel in classic times—it was friendship between two men, of whom the younger was a more formidable rival to the older. It is Jonathan that shines most in this friendship, for he was the one who had least to gain and most to lose from the other. (4) Besides being disinterested, Jonathan's friendship for David was of an eminently holy character. Evidently Jonathan was a man that habitually honoured God, if not in much open profession, yet in the way of deep reverence and submission. And thus, besides being able to surrender his own prospects without a murmur, and feel real happiness in the thought that David would be king, he could strengthen the faith of his friend, as we read afterwards (chap. xxiii. 16). What a priceless blessing is the friendship of those who support and comfort us in great spiritual conflicts, and help us to stand erect in some great crisis of our lives! 2. We cannot turn from this chapter without adding a word on the friendships of the young. It is when hearts are tender that they are more readily knit to each other, as the heart of Jonathan was knit to the heart of David. But the formation of friendships is too important a matter to be safely left to casual circumstances. (1) It ought to be gone about with care. A friend is very useful, if he is rich in qualities where we are poor. 2. But surely, of all qualities in a friend or companion who is to do us good, the most vital is, that he fears the Lord. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *A friendly prince a princely friend*:—I. **THE PRINCELY**

FRIENDSHIP. 1. An unselfish and self-denying avowal. He had soon to learn by experience, and he must have known the fact then, that to befriend David was to displease Saul. Yet is there no faltering in his fidelity. However contrary the waves may be, he changes not the vessel's head; undeterred, he abides faithful. Calumnies and adulations change him not. 2. The religious character of this friendship is forced upon us. He begins with a covenant. Are any friendships worth cultivating whereupon we may not ask the Divine blessing? 3. Such a friendship was not only the affection of a man. He drew the power to thus "love on" from the Great Source of Love. **II. THE PURPOSE THIS FRIENDSHIP SERVED.** 1. God gave David a friend at court. 2. Another purpose the friendship of Jonathan served was to strengthen David's faith. During his exile, especially in the early past, when his fortunes changed so suddenly, David's faith became clouded. It is his voice that exclaims, "There is but a step between me and death." The strong confidence is breathed by Jonathan (chap. xx. 14, 15). When pressed almost beyond endurance and weary with continual flight, it is Jonathan who directs the trembling heart to God (chap. xxiii. 16, 17). **Lessons:** 1. Sanctified friendships are God's hands of guidance. Such lead us always to Himself and never from Him. 2. Friendships formed for social or temporal gain are akin to traffic and bargain-driving on the Temple floor, and must end in ruin. That is no real friendship which fails to lead us to God. 3. True friendships are stable. Human alliances are as fragile as the flowers the frost has traced upon the window, which melt away before the pure beams of love or the heat of trial from within. All friendships that are worth anything must begin with a covenant. (H. E. Stone.)

Ver. 3. There is but a step between me and death.—*Solemn News:*—Notice the views and feelings that will naturally possess a man who believes "there is but a step between him and death," or that his end is near. **I. THE WORLD, WITH ITS PLEASURES, PURSUITS, AND PROSPECTS, WILL APPEAR SMALL.** The mask is taken off now. **II. HE WILL FEEL THAT HIS OWN PERSONAL SALVATION IS TO HIM ABOVE ALL THINGS ELSE IN POINT OF IMPORTANCE.** **III. NEXT TO HIS OWN SALVATION IN POINT OF IMPORTANCE, WILL BE THAT OF HIS FAMILY.** **IV. HE WILL NOT FEEL AT HOME IN THE COMPANY OF THE WICKED, OR IN ANY PURSUIT OR PLEASURE UPON WHICH HE COULD NOT ASK THE BLESSING OF GOD.** **V. HE WILL DESIRE TO SETTLE ALL DISPUTES AND OLD GRUDGES, AND FORGIVE HIS ENEMIES.** **VI. A MAN WHO BELIEVES "THERE IS BUT A STEP BETWEEN HIM AND DEATH" WILL DESIRE TO MAKE HIS WILL.** (T. Kelly.) *But a step:*—This was David's description of his own condition. King Saul was seeking to destroy him. The bitter malice of that king would not be satisfied with anything short of the blood of his rival. **I. There is a sense in which this text is no doubt literally TRUE OF EVERY MAN**—There is but a step between me and death; for life is so short that it is no exaggeration to compare it to a step. 2. But, in another sense, there is but a step between us and death, namely, that life is so uncertain. How unexpectedly it ends. 3. And this is all the more true when we consider that there are so many gates to the grave. We can die anywhere, at any time, by any means. Not alone abroad are we in danger, but at home in security we are still in peril. Wherever you are, you may well feel, "There is but a step between me and death." **II. That to SOME THIS IS SPECIALLY TRUE.** To persons who have reached a ripe old age this is most certainly true: "There is but a step between me and death"? Now, do not object to think about it and talk about it. If you are all right with God, it can be no trouble to you to remember that as your years multiply, there must be so many the fewer in which you are to abide here below. **III. SUPPOSE IT IS NOT SO.** There may be some here that will live to a very great age. Well, what then? If so, I should recommend you to follow the Scriptural advice, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Suppose that it is not true that there is but a step between you and death; nevertheless, while death is at a distance, health and strength furnish the best time for coming to Christ. **IV. But now SUPPOSE THAT IT IS SO.** Suppose that it is so, and suppose, as yet, that you have no good hope. If there is but a step between you and death, yet there is only a step between you and Jesus. There is only a step between you and salvation. God help you to take that step. Suppose that it is so, that you are soon to die; then set your house in order. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The mystic step.* **I. IT IS A CERTAIN STEP.** All must take it. **II. IT IS AN UNCERTAIN STEP.** 1. When we must take it we

cannot tell. 2. Where we must take it is altogether hid from us. III. It is a FINAL STEP. It is final because it puts an end to human distinctions. IV. It is a PARTING STEP. 1. It parts us from this world of matter. We must bid farewell to flower and star. 2. It parts us from friends near and dear to us. 3. It parts us from ourselves. That tender union that subsists between soul and body is rudely torn asunder. V. It is a SOLITARY STEP. Death is a lonely thing. VI. It is ALTOGETHER A SOLEMN STEP. 1. The step of birth is solemn. 2. The step of prayer is solemn. 3. Not less solemn is the step of death. Lord, prepare me for taking this step. (*J. Dunlop.*) *The nearness of death*:—This is true physically, morally, socially, influentially. 1. Physically—Breath is in the nostrils; we know not our narrow escapes from death; the point of a needle may destroy the life of the body, etc. 2. Morally—Character may be ruined in a moment; one sin broke up human history into ruin and sorrow, etc. 3. Socially—When character is ruined, society is closed against a man, etc. 4. Influentially—A man's influence should be the measure of his moral standing; by one false step influence may be impaired or destroyed. The fact that there is but a step between life and death should do five things:—I. IT SHOULD GIVE HIGH SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE TO TIME. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," etc. II. IT SHOULD AWAKEN THE MOST ANXIOUS VIGILANCE. Only one step, and it may be the next! III. IT SHOULD STIMULATE TO PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FUTURE. IV. IT SHOULD IMPART A TENDERER INTEREST TO ALL THE RELATIONSHIPS OF LIFE. V. IT SHOULD LEAD TO THE RIGHT USE OF TEMPORAL POSSESSIONS. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Certainty of death*:—It was SEEMINGLY TRUE CONCERNING DAVID. 1. This teaches us how liable we are to be wrong in our judgments. We can only judge from appearances; therefore we should draw all inferences of importance with caution. 2. Yet this judgment of David's, perhaps, was the instrumental cause of his preservation. It made him cautious. Thus Providence sports with our calculations; "man knoweth not his appointed time, but is like the fishes ensnared in an evil net." II. THE TEXT IS REALLY TRUE CONCERNING SOME INDIVIDUALS NOW IN THE WORLD. 1. Let us in the first place look at the great number of the sick scattered over the face of this well-peopled world. 2. Go into the gloomy cells of condemned criminals, whose life must pay the forfeit of their crimes on the coming morning. 3. Look at the combatants that are now preparing for deadly battle; their country's cause palpitates at their heart, and burns on their tongue. They are destined to fall in the struggle. 4. Listen to the cries of those mariners in distress; "they are going up to the heavens, and now down to the depths." 5. View those men of apoplectic structure. How precarious the hold they have of life! Fresh and hale one minute—the next dead. III. THE DECLARATION IN THE TEXT MAY BE TRUE WITH REGARD TO SOME OF US. 1. Sentence of death has been passed on all men. 2. This sentence has never been repealed. It has not become obsolete; it is not like the antiquated page of an almanac of past times. 3. But this respite is not for any given length of time. It is frugally extended only from moment to moment. A respited criminal knows the length of his respite; we do not. (*T. Macconnel.*)

Ver. 6. **A yearly sacrifice for all the family.**—*The family festival*:—The word in this verse rendered "sacrifice" is in the margin of our English Bible rendered with somewhat greater felicity "feast." There comes to view, therefore, in the narrative an unusually interesting fact; namely, that the family of Jesse continued to keep up their residence in Bethlehem, and carefully observed the household festivals through the year, as in earlier days they had been accustomed. The members of that scattered circle summoned each other regularly to a social reunion annually. I. THE ADVANTAGES FOUND IN THE OBSERVANCE OF THIS YEARLY THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL. 1. Of course, first and chief of these is the consideration that for all God's love and care for us there is due at least full acknowledgment of the hand which has given them to us. "Count up your mercies." A day in each year is surely not too much to be given to this formal rehearsal before God of our plentiful gains and prosperities. 2. In the second place, there is manifest advantage in these annual festivals growing out of the cultivation of our domestic affections and the perpetuation of our home tastes and feelings. It mingles religion with our best sympathies. He cannot be called a manly man who did not feel himself a weaker man from the month when his praying mother died and was buried,

or who does not feel himself a braver, better man, if now perhaps the beloved old voice still lives to be his counsel and his inspiration. 3. Again: there is a manifest advantage in these thanksgiving festivals found in the perpetuation of ancestral memories to which they are calculated most strongly to minister. It is instinctive in the heart of every true man and woman to desire to live beyond the limits of an immediate generation. We toil hard for many a season to keep our name unsullied and preserve our fair fame unstained for the sake of our offspring. 4. And this leads me on to mention a fourth advantage derived from this annual feast; namely, the opportunity it offers for kindling and quickening a true patriotism in the hearts of the people. II. With this exhibition of manifest advantages I CAN HARDLY NEED TO ARGUE FURTHER FOR SUCH OBSERVANCE OF THE DAY. If we go with David at all on his errand, it must be in imagination only. And I think it will be profitable now to ask and answer where he did go. 1. To his own city. 2. In the second place, I suppose David went straight as was possible to his own home in Bethlehem. 3. Then, finally, I imagine David would want to go to various houses of his brethren. I take this from the fact that this day's invitation was given by his brother. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *Christmas and New Year festivities*:—I. REMEMBER TO EXALT GOD IN YOUR FAMILY FESTIVITIES. II. THOROUGHLY SURVEY THE HISTORY OF THE YEAR SINCE YOUR LAST FAMILY FESTIVITIES. 1. It was a yearly sacrifice. Year short space in time, but may be long in events. What changes may crowd into its weeks. Christmas does not always find the family in the old home. 2. On some homes shadows lie thick, others bathed in sunshine. Here Jacob has lost his Joseph, or Rachel mourns her children; here sportive childhood cries, "Oh, call my brother back to me, I cannot play alone." 3. And then, they who come to the festivities come from such various scenes. Here at Bethlehem was David from the court; and Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah from the camp. 4. Nor will any true heart give a secondary place to changes on character the year has produced. III. CONSIDER THE PERSONAL OBLIGATIONS EACH OWES TO THE FAMILY. IV. IN YOUR FESTIVITIES THINK OF OTHERS. (G. B. Johnson.)

Ver. 10. **What if thy father answer thee roughly?**—*A word for the persecuted*:—I. Our first point is, WHAT YOU MAY DO, what there is a possibility of you doing, should your friends answer you roughly. 1. You may "by-and-by be offended." I mean that you may leave Christ altogether, because you cannot bear his cross. 2. Or, it may happen to you that, instead of being by-and-by offended, you may continue for awhile, but you may gradually give way, and at last yield altogether. There are many among us who could bear to lose our heads at a stroke for Christ, but to be burned at a slow fire—ah, that would try us! 3. But if left to ourselves we may fall into what is as bad as open apostasy. When we find the father, or the wife, or the friend answering us roughly, we may make a pitiful compromise between Christ and the world. 4. I will tell you what you may do also, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you to do it. You may take up humbly, but firmly, this decided stand:—"If my father answer me roughly he must do so, but I have another Father who is in heaven and I shall appeal to him. If the world condemn me, I shall accept its condemnation." II. WHAT THE TRIAL WILL DO FOR US IF WE ARE HELPED TO BEAR UP UNDER IT. "What if thy father answer thee roughly?" 1. First, it will grieve us. It is by no means pleasant to be opposed in doing right by those who ought to help us in it. It is very painful to flesh and blood to go contrary to those we love. 2. The opposition of your friends will try your sincerity. If you are a hypocrite you will soon yield to opposition. 3. The rough answers of opponents will try your faith. You say you believe in Jesus: now we shall see if you do, for if you cannot bear a little trial from men and women, surely you will not be able to bear the worse trials from the devil and his angels. If you cannot bear the trials of life, how will you endure the ordeals of death? 4. Persecution will try your love to Jesus. If you really love Him you will cheerfully stand in the pillory of reproach with Him. Your valiant soldier in quiet barracks at home could fight, no doubt, but how do you know till he has passed through a campaign? 5. The rough answers of those who should be your friends will keep us awake. I think it was Erskine who used to say, "Lord, deliver me from a sleepy devil." 6. Such afflictions drive you to your knees. 7. Trials from the enemies of Jesus

confirm our faith. Those who are never tried usually possess a poor, tottering faith, but trial, especially persecution, is like the rough March wind which goes howling through the forest, and while the young oaks are almost torn up by the roots at first, it loosens the soil for them, and they send out more rootlets, till they get such a firm grip that they defy the hurricane. 8. Rough speeches, too, will have this good effect upon genuine Christians, it will lead them to plead for those who utter them. 9. Certainly opposition has another good effect, that it drives those subject to it into the truly separated path; they are known to be Christians, and proclaimed as such by their revilers. 10. One good effect of being persecuted at home is this, it makes you gentler abroad. III. **HOW SHOULD YOU BEHAVE UNDER THE TRIAL?** 1. Never court opposition. 2. Endure whatever you have to endure with the greatest possible meekness. 3. After bearing with meekness return good for evil. For cruel words return warmer love and increased kindness. The most renowned weapon for a Christian to fight his antagonists with is that of overcoming evil with good. 4. Here let me also remark that to this gentle endurance there must be added by the persecuted Christian much exactness of life. IV. **IN DOING ALL THIS WHAT COMFORT MAY YOU EXPECT.** 1. You may have this for your comfort, that the persecutor is in God's hands. He cannot do more than God lets him, and if God permits him to annoy, you may cheerfully bear it. 2. Next, remember, if you keep your conscience clear it is a great joy. Rough answers outside need not trouble you while within there is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Injure your conscience and you lose that consolation; preserve it from evil and you must be happy. 3. Remember that by patiently enduring and persevering you will have fellowship with the grandest spirits that ever lived. 4. Remember, too, that if you have extraordinary troubles Jesus will be doubly near to you. 5. You have the sweet thought also that you are doing more good where you are than if you were placed altogether among the godly. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 17. And Jonathan caused David to swear again because he loved him.—*Love plighting troth*:—I. Now, first, **GREAT LOVE DESIRES TO BIND ITSELF TO THE BELOVED ONE.** And, first of all, remember that Jesus bound Himself to His people by covenant bonds. 2. Then, next, Jesus would have us bound to Him on our part.. This kind of bond can never be all on one side, for true friendship leads to mutual love. II. **GREAT LOVE DESIRES RENEWED PLEDGES FROM ITS OBJECT:** "Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul." 1. It was not out of distrust, but by reason of a sort of sacred jealousy, that "Jonathan caused David to swear again." Our Saviour is as jealous of us as His Father is; the immeasurable greatness of the love of Jesus Christ to us moves Him to feel an infinite jealousy of us. 2. This is the only return we can make for His love. 3. It is for our highest benefit that we should do this. Our love is often so feeble and cold that it needs to be stirred up again. 4. We are often tempted and allured by other loves, and are apt to lend a listening ear to the charmer's fascinating voice. 5. It is for our benefit that we should often renew our pledges of love to our Lord, because we cannot be happy unless we are wholly taken up with love to Him. (C. H. Spurgeon.) **He loved him as he loved his own soul.**—*True friendship*:—I **TRUE FRIENDSHIP REPORTS ITSELF BY PRACTICAL SYMPATHY IN TIMES OF DISTRESS.** 1. This friendship was truly unselfish. 2. This friendship was truly generous. David was a shepherd-boy, Jonathan the king's son. 3. This friendship was truly practical. 4. This friendship was truly reciprocal. David loved Jonathan as fervently as Jonathan loved David. II. **TRUE FRIENDSHIP REPORTS ITSELF BY SOLEMN COMPACTS IN TIMES OF DISTRESS.** "And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul." 1. This covenant was formed in a reverent spirit. Jonathan appeals to God to witness his sincerity, to judge his motive, and to prosper his friend. 2. This covenant was submitted to a severe test. 3. This covenant was confirmed by an affectionate parting. (J. T. Woodhouse.)

Ver. 18. Thou shalt be missed.—*Being missed*:—There are two aspects of truth in these words. One fact is plain enough; the vacant chair will one day be our own. I do not say that the highest motive that can inspire us is to be found in a desire to be gratefully remembered. No; Christian duty has its

highest motives in the love of Christ, and in devotion to the right as right. I. THERE IS A RECOGNITION OF REALITY ALL AROUND AND ABOUT US. Men are for the most part known for what they verily are. II. THERE ARE GRADUATED SPHERES OF INFLUENCE. III. THERE ARE CAPACITIES INDIVIDUAL TO OURSELVES. Each life is a separate creation of God's. No two dogs even have the same countenances. IV. THERE IS A RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP. We cannot feel alike to all if we would. (*W. M. Statham.*) **Thy seat shall be empty.** *The vacant chair*:—1. I point out to you the father's vacant chair. 2. I go a little farther on in your house, and I find the mother's vacant chair. 3. I go on a little further, and I come to the invalid's chair. 4. I pass on, and I find one more vacant chair. It is a high chair. It is the child's chair. If that chair be occupied, I think it is the most potent chair in all the household. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 20—37. **And I will shoot three arrows.**—*The claims of friendship*:—I. THE ARROWS TAUGHT THAT A STRONG AND NOBLE FRIEND WAS STANDING IN THE BREACH. 1. Never be ashamed to own a friend. Do not count him your friend whose name you are ashamed to mention. 2. Never be ashamed to speak up for the cause of Truth. Let the arrows witness to the simplicity and fervour of your allegiance to whatever is lovely and of good report. II. THE ARROWS SPOKE OF IMMINENT DANGER. "Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to put David to death." "The arrows are beyond thee." You have hoped against hope; you have tried to keep your position; you have done your duty, pleaded your cause, sought the intercession of your friends, prayed, wept, agonized: but it is all in vain; the arrow's flight proves that you must go whither you may. But take these thoughts for your comfort. 1. There are things we never leave behind. David had an inalienable possession in the love of his friend, in the devotion of the people, in the memory of God's goodness. There are threads woven into the fabric of our life which can never be extracted or obliterated. 2. There is a Divine purpose determining our course. To the lad there was but royal caprice in the flight of the arrow. "What are you doing, my little fellow?" "I am picking up the prince's arrows; we generally go for game, but he is playing at it to-day." That was all he knew; how little did he divine the purpose of his Master, and still less realise that each fitting arrow was, so to speak, taken from God's quiver and directed by His hand. There is no chance in a good man's life. Let us recognise the providence of the trifle. He is sending us away. 3. The going forth is necessary to secure greater happiness than we leave. Had David lingered in the palace, his life would have been forfeited, and he would have missed all the glory and bliss with which his cup ran over in after years. This was the way to the throne. Follow the arrow's flight then—beyond the warm circle in which you have so long sheltered; beyond the south-land to the icy north; beyond the known to the unknown. Like another Abraham, go into the land which God will show thee; like another Columbus, turn thy prow in the wake of the setting sun. III. THE ARROWS TAUGHT THAT HUMAN LOVE MUST SUFFER SEPARATION. This was the last meeting of these two noble hearts for a long time. Indeed, the friends only met once more, shortly before Jonathan's death. They had realised that this must be so. These are the hours that leave scars on hearts and whiten the hair. Christ comes to us in these dark moments as of old to the disciples, on whom had broken the full import of his departure. "Let not your hearts be troubled." (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Ver. 25. **David's place was empty.**—*The empty place*:—"And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty" (1 Samuel, xx 25). I shall look at these words in the spirit of accommodation to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. There, too, will be a feast, a feast provided not by an earthly king, but by Him who is the King of kings. Let us consider some of the reasons which may probably be assigned for these vacant places. 1. But some places are empty. Some are empty, and we may envy the men and women, brothers and sisters in Christ, who once sat there, but will sit there no more. They are gone to claim the inheritance of which the Lord said, "I will give it you." 2. But other places are vacant not through this heavenly translation. And as we ask, "Where are they who usually occupy

them?" the answer comes, "They are suffering under the Lord's hand." Yes, many places are empty for this reason, and where this is the reason the vacancy is no reproach. 3. Sometimes David's place is empty because he is engaged in Christian work. 4. Other places, too, are vacant from motives which are entitled to tender consideration, and which also require as tender correction. They fear they are not in a true and befitting mood for the sacrament. They are cold. They know not how it is, but somehow the spiritual temperature is low. 5. But other places are empty for reasons less worthy. Their blank spaces tell, it may be, of hearts that are dying through habitual sin, or habitual neglect of the very conditions of life. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *The empty place: A Christmas Day sermon*.—I. **THE EMPTY PLACE IN THE PERSECUTOR'S HOUSE**: "David's place was empty." David had good reason for vacating his place at Saul's table, for the passionate king was so malicious, and so embittered against him, that he sought his life. The child of a Roman noble had stepped into some little place where humble and unlettered people met to hear the gospel preached, to sing songs in the name of Jesus, and to keep holy one day in the week; and there that youthful heart had learnt the story of the cross, and by the grace of God had been brought to love the Saviour. As soon as the fact was made known, the officers of justice would take away the child from the father's house, and hale the young believer off to prison, and so another seat was empty. You know how it was in our own land, how many a seat was empty during the persecutions of Queen Mary. If martyr days should come back again, could we vacate our places? Could the husband let his wife and children go for Christ's sake? II. **THERE IS ANOTHER PLACE WHICH SOMETIMES BECOMES EMPTY, THAT IS, THE PLACE OF SINFUL PLEASURES**. This empty place is the result of the working of God's grace in the heart. III. **THE PLACE OF OUR OCCUPATION HAS BEEN EMPTY**. IV. During the past year, many of you now present have had a **PLACE IN THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD'S PEOPLE**. V. I have now to say just a few words specially to the members of the church about **THEIR PLACE AT THE PRAYER-MEETING**. VI. There is another David's place that is sometimes empty, and that ought not to be so, it is **THE PLACE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE**. VII. Again, I hope that **OUR PLACE AT THE LORD'S TABLE** will not be empty at any time when it is possible for us to occupy it. VIII. When you will be keeping the Christmas feast, there will be many family gatherings, and in those family gatherings there will be **SOME HOUSEHOLDS WHERE DAVID'S PLACE WILL BE EMPTY**. IX. **THERE WILL BE NO EMPTY PLACE IN HEAVEN**. In that great family gathering up above, they will not be able to say, "David's place is empty." (*G. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 32—42. **And Jonathan answered Saul, his father, and said unto him, Wherefore should he be slain?**—*David's friend, Jonathan*.—"There is little friendship in the world," said Lord Bacon. "O friendship," wrote the author of *Endymion*, "of all things the most rare; and therefore most rare, because most excellent." 1. **Friendship means more than affection**. Strange to say, greater friendships exist than in the family circle. 2. Again, friendship is not identical with the religious hope. The well-meaning, but ignorant, have beheaded the saints. 3. But while friendship is by no means involved in the family or the church affection, it yet remains true that the purest religious hope is the basis of the highest friendships. Great deeds are never done by those whose belief cuts off immortality. 1. **TRUE FRIENDSHIP IS BASED ON RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Friendship is the outgrowth of righteousness. The most hallowed relationships afford no ground for unjust deeds among friends. The child's love for the father is no excuse for wrongdoing at that father's command. II. **TRUE FRIENDSHIP MAKES NO ACCOUNT OF PERSONAL DANGER**. The world is slow in learning that there is a greater existence than self. 1. We turn from majorities and minorities to observe that personal comforts and discomforts are no criteria of action. The question is not as to pleasure and pain, but rather as to the highest obligations. 2. The true friend is never afraid of danger. The son may die by the father's javelin, but Jonathan's friendship is true. III. **TRUE FRIENDSHIP REJOICES IN OTHERS' PROSPERITY**. (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

Ver. 34. **And Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger.**—*Jonathan's moral courage*.—I propose to enquire into the moral meaning of this incident; to see whether there is anything in it that applies to our

own circumstances. I think it impossible to read this story without having the mind arrested at several points of unusual interest. I. HERE IS THE SADDEST OF ALL SIGHTS—MAN ARRAYED AGAINST MAN. Not man against a savage beast; but man against his own kind. II. HERE WE HAVE THE RUPTURE OF THE MOST SACRED BONDS. Who is it that is offended in this case? It is not a stranger; it is the son that rose in fierce anger, being grieved for David and ashamed of his own father. When fathers occupy their right positions, sons, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will be likely to occupy theirs. A good example is never lost. III. Here, too, is THE ASSERTION OF THE HIGHEST INSTINCT. What is it that asserts itself in this case? It is the spirit of right. Men that get up from dinner tables and say, "No! I am ashamed of your evil doing; and I will not taste your bread!" We, poor hounds, tarry at the trough and satisfy our appetites, and slake our thirst, but the man that is going out will save the world! IV. HERE WE HAVE A DISPROOF OF A FAMILIAR PROVERB. The familiar proverb is, "Blood is thicker than water." Jonathan says, "Right is thicker than blood." V. Here we have THE ESPOUSAL OF A NOBLE POLICY. What was the policy of Jonathan? He espoused the cause of right against might. David had no resources. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 42. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord.—*Real friendship*:—"All faithful friends went on a pilgrimage years ago, and none of them have ever come back"; so wrote one of the Puritan divines, whose heart was depressed at the time most likely. Perhaps the best definition of friendship is that given by Addison: it is "a strong and habitual inclination in two persons to promote the good and happiness of each other." I. TRUE FRIENDSHIP REQUIRES SOME ACKNOWLEDGED BASIS OF INDIVIDUAL WORTH. To be very popular is very different from being beloved. Froissart says of Gaston de Foix, "In everything he was so perfect that he cannot be praised too much; he loved what ought to be beloved, and hated what ought to be condemned; and he never had miscreant with him." II. TRUE FRIENDSHIP DEMANDS COURAGE AND SELF-SACRIFICE IN INSTANT ANSWER TO THE CALL. When Jonathan rose up from the table there was more than one javelin in the air coming towards him; there was the mad king's wrath shooting lances of fire also. III. TRUE FRIENDSHIP BECOMES MORE DISINTERESTED AS IT BECOMES MORE LOVING. IV. TRUE FRIENDSHIP SHOWS ITSELF BY DELICATE AND SOMETIMES MYSTERIOUS SIGNALS OF COMMUNICATION. Indeed, when two men become fast and sympathetic comrades, we sometimes fail to discover what they find in each other so companionable. V. TRUE FRIENDSHIP FINDS ITS HIGHEST MODEL IN THE LORD OF LIFE AND GLORY. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Divine goodness in human friendship*:—IN ITS FREEDOM FROM ALL JEALOUSY, JONATHAN'S CONDUCT WAS MOST EXEMPLARY. It was here that the son proved himself to be so much more noble than the father; for Jonathan saw himself surpassed by David, and yet was his faithful friend, and indeed found one reason for his love in that superiority which David had secured. II. THE FRIENDSHIP OF JONATHAN WAS EMINENTLY PRACTICAL. It did not consist either of fair and flattering words which he uttered, or of a mere luxury of sentiment which he enjoyed. On the very first day of its life it proved its power, by prompting Jonathan to put his royal robes on David's shoulder, to gird his sword on David's thigh, and to place his bow in David's hands; as much as to say, "I will give thee of my best. Thou art more of a king's son than I am. These befit thee more than me." There are friendships in the world which cost those who cherish them nothing, and like many other cheap things they are worth just what they cost. JONATHAN'S FRIENDSHIP FOR DAVID WAS EMINENTLY UNSELFISH. It was much that he could do for David; it was but little that David could do for him. Personally, he had no interest in David's continued life and increasing power; but, speaking after the manner of men, his interest lay in the opposite direction. To Saul's selfish heart this nobleness of love and self-forgetfulness seemed nothing but wilful wickedness and sheer madness. How could he comprehend it? IV. JONATHAN'S FRIENDSHIP HAD THE CROWNING GRACE OF CONSTANCY. It began in the midst of David's new-born popularity, but it lasted through all his reverses. 1. There is one fact belonging to this history which has seldom had the attention it deserves. While Jonathan was always faithful to David, he was never false to his father. Some men will cultivate one virtue alone, and make it an Aaron's rod—

swallowing up all the other virtues; but this man did not suffer his virtues as a friend to devour his virtues as a son. 2. It needs no word to prove that the friendship we have been studying must have been a great help and blessing to David. How great, is known only to Him by whom the boon was bestowed. 3. As we contemplate the character of Jonathan, we are made increasingly thankful that the immortality of the good is revealed in God's Word beyond the possibility of doubt or question. We are forbidden to think that the love of Jonathan's heart, which wrought so beneficently on earth, labours no longer for the welfare of the others. Can it be possible that the God who created it in His own image doomed it to indolence? Would not that be to doom the possessor of it to misery? (C. *Vince*.)

CHAPTER XXI.

Vers. 1—15. **Then came David to Nob.**—*Almost gone*:—It is not easy to walk with God. I. **THE STEPS OF DAVID'S DECLENSION.** The first sign of what was impending was his remark to Jonathan, that there was but a step between himself and death (1 Sam. xx. 3). Evidently his faith was beginning to falter; for nothing could have been more definite than the Divine assurances that he was to be king. The winds and waves were more daunting than the promise of God was inspiring. Perchance David relied too absolutely on what he had received, and neglected the daily renewal of the heavenly unction (John i. 33, 34; 1 John iii. 24). Next, he adopted a subterfuge, which was not worthy of him, nor of his great and mighty Friend. Late in the afternoon of the day preceding the weekly Sabbath, the king's son-in-law arrived, with a mere handful of followers, at the little town of Nob, situated among the hills about five miles to the south of Gibeah. Probably the great annual convocations had fallen into disuse, and the path to the simple sanctuary was only trodden by occasional visitors, such as Doeg, who came to pay their vows, or be cleansed from ceremonial pollution. There was, evidently, no attempt made to prepare for large numbers; the hard fare of the priests only just sufficed for them, and the presence of two or three additional strangers completely overbalanced the slender supply; there were not five loaves of common bread to spare. It was necessary to answer the questions, and allay the suspicions of the priest; and David did this by pleading the urgency of the mission on which his royal master had sent him. But a chill struck to his heart whilst making these excuses to the simple-minded priest, and enlisting his willing co-operation in the matter of provisions and arms, as he saw the dark visage of Doeg, the Edomite, "the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul." He knew that the whole story would be mercilessly retailed to the vindictive and vengeful monarch. Ten miles beyond lay the proud Philistine city of Gath, which at that time had sent its champion forth in all the pride of his stature and strength. What worse fate could await him at Gath than that which threatened him each hour he lingered within the limits of Judah! He therefore resolved to make the plunge. Not a little to his dismay, and perhaps on account of Goliath's sword hanging at his belt, he was instantly recognised; and the servants of Achish recalled the refrain, which had already awoken the jealousy of Saul. He was instantly regarded with hatred, as having slain his ten thousands. He saved himself by descending to the unworthy subterfuge of counterfeiting the behaviour of a madman. II. **THE PSALM OF THE SILENT DOVE.** At first sight we are startled with the apparently irreconcilable discrepancy between the scenes we have just described and the 56th Psalm, the inscription of which associates it with them. Closer inspection will reveal many resemblances between the singer's circumstances and his touching words. First stanza (1-4).—He turns to God from man; to the Divine mercy from the serried ranks of his foes, who, surging around him, threaten to engulf and swallow him up. Thus he climbs up out of the weltering waves, his feet on a rock, a new song in his mouth, the burden of which is, "I will not be afraid." Second Stanza (5-9).—Again, he is in the depths. The returning wave

has sucked him back. His boast changed to a moan, his challenge to complaint. Yet as we condole, we hear the voice of faith again ringing out the positive assurance, "I know that God is for me," and again the old refrain comes back. Third Stanza (10-13).—There is no further relapse. His heart is fixed, trusting the Lord; the vows of God are upon his head. And now, as once again he regains the sunny uplands, which he had so shamefully renounced in his flight from Gibeah to Nob, from Nob to Gath, from Gath to feigned insanity, he is sure that henceforth he will walk before God in the light of life. Truth, purity, joy, shall be the vesture of his soul. III. THE CONSEQUENCES TO AHIMELECH. A child of God may be forgiven and restored, yet the consequences of his sin may involve sufferings to many innocent lives. So it was in this instance. Doeg took the opportunity of ingratiating himself in the royal favour, by narrating what he had seen at Nob. He carefully withheld the unsuspecting innocence and ignorance of the priest, and so told the tale as to make it appear that he and his house were accomplices with David's action, and perhaps bent on helping David to gain supreme power. By one ruthless act, the entire priestly community was exterminated. There was but one survivor, for Abiathar escaped, carrying the ephod in his hands; and one day, to his horror, David beheld the dishevelled, blood-besmeared form of the priest, as he sped breathless and panic-stricken up the valley of Elah, to find shelter with the outlaw band in the Cave of Adullam. We shall hear of him again. Meanwhile, let children of God beware! Sin is bitter to the conscience of the sinner, and in its consequences upon others. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

Ver. 7. **A certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord.**—*Doeg the Edomite*:—Doeg was "detained there before the Lord." How or why he "was detained before the Lord," we are not informed. Doeg the Edomite was "detained there that day before the Lord," and with his eyes upturned and his arms across his breast, very probably groaning as if moved to the heart by the aspect of poor David and his few straggling companions, dusty, and dirty and hungry. Doeg witnessed all, and hurrying off to the royal palace told King Saul all he saw and all he heard during his stay at Nob, as passing between David and Ahimelech. This malicious spy was glad to violate all confidence. I. DOEG WAS DETAINED THERE THAT DAY BEFORE THE LORD AS A SPY. Now of all the characters in the world the spy is the meanest and the most despicable. It was allowed at the time, and historians confirm it, that the espionage system of the Duke of Wellington, during his Peninsular campaign, was the most perfect ever known in any European army, and yet his scouts were selected without regard to character. No man respects a spy. Is Doeg dead? It is to be feared that in every age there have been those who come to the house of God only to hear and report, and misrepresent the services of the sanctuary. The spy has neither character nor conscience. II. DOEG IS THERE THAT DAY AS A MALICIOUS TALE-BEARER AND WICKED SLANDERER. The tale-bearer and murderer are regarded by God as one and the same. A heathen once said, "The slanderer is the most terrible of wild beasts." III. It is possible that Doeg may have been "detained there that day before the Lord," for the very reason THAT HE KNEW HE WAS NOT WANTED. It is clear that Ahimelech did not want him, and equally clear that the eighty-five priests whom he afterwards murdered so wantonly did not want him, and still more obvious that David did not want him. Not a single worshipper in the priestly City of Nob. Some men are woefully gifted with a perverse spirit, and their happiness consists in trying to make other men miserable. Their aim is to annoy; evil is their good. IV. It may be that Doeg was "detained there that day before the Lord," FROM THE FORCE OF HABIT. He had been a church-going man. V. It may be that Doeg was "detained there that day before the Lord" FROM THE LOVE OF THE SERVICE. The old Rabbis have a tradition that Doeg was a skilful performer on the psaltery, and wherever music was the prevailing part of the worship, he was present to take part in "the service of song." If there is no higher motive than the mere gratification of a refined ear or a cultivated taste, or even a delicate sentimentalism, the ordinances cannot profit. VI. It may be that Doeg was "detained there that day before the Lord" FROM THE HOPE OF PATRONAGE OR PREFERMENT. He was only chief of the herdsmen of King Saul; probably, by acting as a spy and a tale-bearer, he hoped to be advanced to some situation of honour and emolument. Doeg is ready for any

work, from that of the highest seraph in heaven down to the lowest fiend in hell, if it will only pay! VII. It may be that Doeg was "detained there that day before the Lord," because the service at Nob was a BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL WORSHIP. This was a priestly city, and the Divine arrangement provided that the house of Levi should have the sacerdotal cities and their suburbs. Doeg, therefore, as a Hebrew, had a right to attend upon any altar that represented the religion of the Hebrew commonwealth. Oh! that is God's meeting-place with the inquiring saint who is there that day "detained before the Lord" because he wants to meet and hold communion with God. (R. Irvine, D.D.)

Ver. 8. **The king's business required haste.**—*Haste! Haste!*:—1. We are always called upon to work as if we had but one day to work in. 2. Such impetuosity need not involve carelessness. 3. The most deliberate things are to be done with the intensest earnestness, and the intensest earnestness is never to allow itself to be deprived of the advantage and utility of the highest spiritual dignity.—When the king's business relates to the salvation of souls, who dare say there is a moment to be lost? 4. In all things let us hear the voice of the Saviour saying, "That thou doest, do quickly." (J. Parker, D.D.)

Ver. 9. **And David said, There is none like that: give it me.**—*Goliath's sword*:—I. First, then, THE HISTORY OF GOLIATH'S SWORD. See it, in the first instance, hanging at the giant's side. The man himself is mighty. Hark how he challenges the hosts of Israel. The after history of this sword is interesting. What became of it after David, having no sword of his own, put it to the giant's throat and cut off his head with it? It was Goliath's no longer; it was David's, really. It is evident that he was not content to have it ornamenting his own residence—he would give it to the Lord. He found it in his heart to hang the sword in the Holy Place, that God might have the glory. What happened next? Why, long afterwards, when David wanted a sword, God gave this very weapon back to him. Nobody is ever the poorer for lending to the Lord. God gave the sword back to David in the hour of his extremity. Now I want to say to you, surely you remember some great deliverance of days gone by. You remember the weapons with which God enabled you to carve your way through obstacles which you supposed must overwhelm you. You are getting into a tight place again, are you? Well, call to mind the previous experience; grasp the old sword, and trust the same, unchanging God. Use the promise that helped you out before. II. But we shall, I hope, get still further blessing when we think of this sword FROM A SPIRITUAL POINT OF VIEW. These things may well be called an allegory. The war is still waging. The Philistine is still in the land. And what is David's sword? The sword is God's Word, Divine Truth, the Gospel of the Grace of God. "The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We do not want another weapon. There is nothing to induce us to try another. We have watched the others trying them. They have had such poor success that it makes us the more content with the old Jerusalem blade. (Thomas Spurgeon.) *Tried Weapons*:—We propose to treat this text with special reference to the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. 1. There is none like it for variety of adaptation. 2. As for argument, where can we find a blade more keenly argumentative? 3. I would impress all young readers with the comprehensiveness of the Bible, with its universality of adaptation to all the circumstances and necessities of human life. 4. There is none like it for ease of carriage. There are weapons that are very difficult to carry, but the sword of the Lord is not one of them. 5. There is none like it for universality of use. Children and sick persons can use it; the poorest man can avail himself of it; the busiest man may find a moment for its exercise. 6. The sick can use this sword of the Lord. (J. Parker, D.D.)

Ver. 31. **And he changed his behaviour before them.**—*David scrabbling at the gate*:—Taking the behaviour of David as a suggestion, I wish to tell you how many of the wise, and the brave, and the regal sometimes play the fool. I. I REMARK THAT THOSE MEN AS BADLY PLAY THE FOOL AS THIS MAN OF THE TEXT, WHO IN ANY CRISIS OF LIFE TAKE THEIR CASE OUT OF THE HAND OF GOD. David, in this case, acted as though there were no God to lift him out of the predicament.

The life of the most insignificant man is too vast for any human management. II. I REMARK THAT ALL THOSE PERSONS PLAY THE FOOL, AS CERTAINLY AS DID THIS MAN OF THE TEXT, WHO ALLOW THE TECHNICALITIES OF RELIGION TO STOP THEIR SALVATION. III. I GO STILL FURTHER, AND SAY TO YOU THAT THOSE MEN PLAY THE FOOL WHO UNDERTAKE TO PAY OUT ETERNITY FOR TIME. IV. I SAY TO YOU THAT THOSE MEN PLAY THE FOOL WHO, WHILE THEY ADMIT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF RELIGION, SET IT DOWN FOR FUTURE ATTENDANCE. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

CHAPTER XXII.

Vers. 1, 2. **David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam.**—*David at the cave of Adullam*:—David had strangled a lion, slain a giant, and overcome two hundred Philistines; but he is himself overcome by his needless fear. The fear that terrified David arose as much from his own sin as from Saul's fury. Had David been truthful to the priest at Nob he would not have had to dissemble before the king of Gath, and hide like a traitor in the cave of Adullam. One misstep leads to another. The troubles of life frequently spring from our own folly. I. **DAVID'S ESCAPE TO THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.** 1. It was a place of perfect safety. 2. It was a place of comparative seclusion. David needed rest and quiet. The tremendous excitement through which he had passed had exhausted both body and mind. 3. It was a place of earnest supplication. If David sinned at Nob, he sincerely repented at Adullam. David sought for forgiveness for his sin. David sought protection from his enemies. David sought deliverance from his prison. There is a cave of Adullam in every life. Doubt may be such a cave. Persecution may be such a cave. Sickness may be such a cave. Bereavement may be such a cave. There is no cave deep and dark enough to shut out God. II. **DAVID'S ASSOCIATES IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.** Notice three things respecting David's followers: 1. It was an affectionate association. In time of trouble God will raise up friends to comfort His believing children. 2. It was a mixed association. 3. It was a faithful association. These men proved both their courage and constancy. When David longed for water from Bethlehem they imperilled their lives to gratify his desire. David's experience agrees in some points with Christ's. David was concealed in a cave, Christ was laid in a manger. David was an outlaw, Christ was despised and rejected of men. David was sustained by men in distress, Christ selected for His disciples men who were poor and unknown. David was made a captain over four hundred, Christ is the Captain and Saviour of all who are in distress. If any man is weary of Satan's service, he may become a soldier of the cross. III. **DAVID'S THOUGHTFULNESS IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.** David was therefore deeply concerned for their safety, and his ardent attachment manifested itself in three ways: 1. By his dangerous journey to promote the comfort of his parents. "David went thence to Moab." This was not a long journey, but it was difficult to accomplish. 2. By his earnest intercession to obtain protection for his parents. 3. By his special endeavour to secure respect for his parents. "He brought them before the king." This was a prudent introduction. "And they dwelt with him": This was gracious reception. "All the while that David was in the hold:" This was generous hospitality. We cannot too highly commend David's devotion to his parents. He was willing to sacrifice his life and liberty for their safety. IV. **DAVID'S DEPARTURE FROM THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.** We may learn three things from David's departure from the cave of Adullam. 1. Good men receive timely direction from God. "Abide not in the hold." God will not disappoint those who wait for his guidance. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. 2. Good men receive minute direction from God. "Get thee into the land of Judah." All the agencies of life—seen and unseen—known and unknown—are regulated by God. 3. Good men promptly obey the direction of God. "Then David departed." Whether God call us to serve or suffer, we must cheerfully obey. We dare not resist the leadings of Divine providence. There is a time coming when we must all depart. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*)

Ver. 2. And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him.—*A refuge for the distressed*:—At the period of which the text speaks, David was leading the life of an outcast and an outlaw. Being expelled from Israel and Philistia, nothing remained for him to do but to gather around him a band of equally unfortunate men and defend himself with his sword. Cannot we see in David collecting around him all who were in distress, in debt, or for any reason discontented, a foreshadow of the Friend of publicans and sinners, of Him who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Again a man's religion may be concealed in his heart, and may not do the good it ought to do as an example till distress come upon him and cause it to be seen in all its power. In many a true believer piety is like a drum, which nobody hears of unless it be beaten. The cave of Adullam was a refuge for debtors, and so is the Church of Christ. The third class of people who came to David at the cave of Adullam were those who were discontented. So, too, there is a "Divine discontent" which brings people to Christ. Are you dissatisfied? Then go to Christ and fill up the hollowness of your soul with Him. This is the truth which is contained in the common saying, that when people become disappointed with the world, it is the last resource to turn saint. The last thing we note about the miserable men who came for refuge to David is that they were taught by him to live good lives. They were a rough, lawless set of men, yet they could be kept in check by the influence of their beloved captain, David. So useful and helpful to their neighbours did these soldiers become, that the servants of Nabal could not help acknowledging as much. "But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them." Now surely if men's lives were made good by coming to David, the effect which coming to Christ should have upon our characters is infinitely more beneficial. (E. J. Hardy, M.A.)

Vers. 5—23. And the prophet Gad said unto David.—*A friend and a foe*:—THE VISIT OF GAD THE SEER. David had been brought very low through his own mistakes. God proved him in the hold. Then He sent to him. Wherever you are, wait for a message from God before you move. II. SAUL'S APPEAL TO HIS SERVANTS. No one answered it but the alien Doeg. Notice, Herod was an Edomite. The race always conspicuous for hatred to Israel. What circumspection is necessary in God's children! Always a Doeg looking on! (Exod. xiii. 13; 1 Peter ii. 12, 15, 16.) False witness, often nearly true. "A lie that is half a truth is ever the worst of lies" (Mark xiv. 55-59; Matt. xxvi. 61). Built on supposition (Acts xxi. 27-29). III. "GOD FULFILLS HIMSELF IN MANY WAYS." The massacre of Nob, though unjustifiable in Saul, was God's sentence on Eli's house (1 Sam. iii. 12-14; Isa. v. 7, &c.). IV. SECURITY WITH DAVID (*verse* 23). This was beautiful faith. The outcast promising protection because the Lord was with him. He was willing to protect him with his life. So was Jesus. He was not only willing, but He did it (1 John iii. 8, 16). (R. E. Faulkner.)

Ver. 14. And Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David.—*In defence of the king*:—Now, it was for acts of kindness to David, the outcast and fugitive, that Ahimelech the high priest was confronted by the infuriated king. Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, the king's son-in-law, who goes at thy bidding and is honourable in thine house? Did I pray for him as against thee? That were far from me. Let not the king accuse me falsely; for as to trouble between Saul and David I knew nothing, less or more." Brave words, O priest! Never did martyr witness more magnificently for the truth, and never with less hope of pardon. The gigantic figure of the king, clad in armour and terrible in wrath, towered before the white-robed priest. It is a very beautiful, even if it be a very costly, thing to live a righteous life. The whole spirit and range of heroism is to be found in that order of piety which this high priest illustrated and adorned. Analyse this great high priestly life. I. IT WAS A LIFE GIVEN UP IN DEFENCE OF THE KING'S BETTER NATURE AGAINST HIS WORSE NATURE. He aimed to rescue Saul from Saul. It is as if he had said, "Why do you so unking yourself as to injure a man who would not injure you? David is your friend. Jealousy demeans you. Jealousy

and not David is your real foe." II. AGAIN, IT WAS A LIFE GIVEN UP IN DEFENCE OF AHIMELECH'S OWN BETTER NATURE AGAINST HIS LOWER NATURE. Doubtless this high priestly life was of value to him who had it. But he made no plea for it. He pleaded only for the life of the outcast and fugitive. III. IT WAS A LIFE GIVEN UP IN DEFENCE OF THE INNOCENT FUGITIVE. Ahimelech, friend of the king, dared to defend the outcast David. IV. NOW CONSIDER THAT THIS DEFENCE—THREEFOLD—IS WORTH WHATEVER IT COSTS. The defence of my neighbour's better nature against his worse nature; of my own better nature against my worse nature, and of Christ against the world, is worth whatever it may cost. First, because a man's soul, or immortal nature, is of more value to him than any imaginable physical safety or comfort. Second, because my neighbour's better nature is of more value to the world and to me, than anything else I can give to the world, or the world can give me. This world has enough of everything but goodness. It does not need that I give it anything, unless I can give it goodness. Let me help a man to conquer himself and I am a philanthropist. Third, it is worth all it costs because, in defending the outcast against the king, we may be defending the king against the outcast. In the councils of heaven Saul the king is the outcast and David the outcast is the king. This striking reversal of the real and the apparent is one of the most ordinary of processes when heaven looks at earth. Things are not what they seem. However little the evidence of it, Righteousness is the one true monarch over men. (*Edward Braislin, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 2. **Shall I go?**—*The leadings of Providence*:—David lived under the Mosaic dispensation. Now, that dispensation, as it was remarkable for many extraordinary circumstances, was so more especially for the particular revelation which God was pleased to make in it of Himself to mankind upon special occasions. The will of the Lord appears to have been made known in five several ways: (1) By voice, as when God conversed with Moses by an audible voice; and with Samuel, when he was yet a child. (2) By dreams. (3) By visions, in which a prophet in an ecstasy, without being asleep, saw some striking parabolic representation of what was about to take place. (4) By special revelation, in which was communicated to a prophet, probably by some remarkable impression on his mind, which clearly discovered its Divine origin, the will of God, or the notification of some future event. And (5) By Urim and Thummim. When the primitive Church had been some time established in the world, a practice prevailed amongst some of its members of consulting the Scriptures as a directory of conduct—the Bible was opened at random, and the passage which first presented itself was considered as indicating the Divine will. By degrees this practice came to be generally disused, and men were contented to remain in ignorance concerning events before them, trusting only in the general superintendence of Providence. Another way by which many persons have in all ages endeavoured to discover the direction of God respecting their conduct, has been by observing what they have termed the leadings of Providence; that is, by attentively considering those impressions on the mind, or those extraordinary circumstances, by which they suppose God may point out His will that they should act in this or that way. But it will be asked, Are not promises of direction and guidance given to us in Scripture? Are we not told that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and are we not bidden to acknowledge God in all our ways, and assured that He will then direct our paths? For our guide in temporal things, God has given us our understanding. 1. Let our first rule be, that we are chiefly solicitous to discharge Duty. 2. Beware of mistaking your own inclinations for the suggestions of Providence. 3. It may be laid down as a maxim, that Providence never sanctions the neglect of any duty to point out other courses of action. There is a beautiful uniformity in the conduct which God prescribes for us. No duties ever clash with each other. 4. We ought to beware of seeking for other directions than those which Providence has been

pleased to appoint. Do not expect revelations where God has not promised them. 5. Let me also caution you against a partial use of the means which Providence has afforded us for our direction. You pray, perhaps, very sincerely; but do you also listen to the suggestions of prudence; do you take the advice of wise and faithful friends? (*John Venn.*)

Vers. 4—26. Arise, go down to Keilah.—*The training in the wilderness*:—The contrast between David at Nob or Gath and at Hareth and Keilah is most marked. 1. It is God's will he desires to know (ver. 4). Truly David at this time waited only upon God, and his expectation was from Jehovah (Ps. lxii). Hunger for Divine guidance is a gracious sign! The Master blessed such (Matt. v. 6). Such a state of heart is preparation surely for larger blessing. 2. Obedience and humble reliance upon God may not lessen difficulties? David's own people oppose his advance upon Keilah. So he and his enter Keilah. All now is well surely! Yes, all is well, but it looked not so. Strange that in obeying God he found more difficulties! Not so if we understand he is in training for the crown. Is this not so of all those who are unto God a nation of priestly kings? Not a murmur escapes David's lips. Into Ziph, a small place at the edge of the Southern desert, David enters, concealing himself in the ravines there. The time spent in Ziph was a time of separation and solitariness. 3. Obedience leading to apparently hopeless disaster. To seek the favour of the king the Ziphites send word to him of David. Deceit generally sets its face toward power. It is well to be on the side which looks like winning at any rate. From their point of view their "part" might be justified. What can we say, however, concerning Saul's reception of these Ziphites? What a whimpering, hypocritical utterance: "Blessed be ye of the Lord, for ye have compassion on me!" How horrid the "forms" of piety when the thing itself is gone! A benediction in the name of God from Saul! Success is with these plotters! They track their prey. Before Saul and his men David flees down the face of the rock into the wilderness. Here truly they are enclosing him in the net they have spread. Strangers had risen up against him, and the oppressor sought for his soul. (Ps. liv. 3). Hope began to droop her wings. (ver. 27). Times of deepest distress are hours of God's deliverances. Have we no record indelibly written of God's delivering mercy?—no place called Sela-hammablekoth (ver. 28), or Rock of Divisions, to which memory leads? Psalm liv., ascribed to this period, tells of calmness of heart during this exciting time. "Behold, God is mine helper" (ver. 4). (*H. E. Stone.*)

Ver. 12. They will deliver thee up.—*The men of Keilah*:—When first introduced to us here, David is represented as being reduced to great straits by the malignant hostility of Saul. But although David's condition seems so desperate, and Saul's power so great—when an emergency arises, and the men of Keilah find themselves in sore straits, it is not from Saul, the king after man's own heart, but from the despised David, that assistance comes. Let us try and picture to ourselves the scene. The countryfolk are crowding into the little town by hundreds. Their homesteads have been pillaged and burned, and they themselves have only escaped with their lives. The ruthless Philistines have already stripped some of them of everything they possess, and unless unlooked for help arrive there seems no escape from the superior forces of the foe. They have taken refuge for the moment in Keilah, but this temporary shelter affords them no real security. The town is quite unprepared to stand a siege, or even to resist a vigorous assault. On every face you can see sorrow and anxiety only too plainly printed. Suddenly breathless messengers appear approaching the walls of the little city, and it is easy to see that they are the bearers of good tidings. From lip to lip the good news spreads, and all is summed up in a single word, and that word is David. Yes, it is actually true; the conqueror of Goliath of Gath has once again put his life in his hands, and wrought a great deliverance. The Philistines are utterly routed, and Keilah is saved. Imagine if you can the feelings of the eager multitude at that moment, as the good news spreads like wildfire amongst them. See yonder the old men, the fathers of the city, are lifting up their hands to God, and pouring forth praise; mothers are weeping for joy, and strong men have tears in their eyes as they grasp each other's hands in heartfelt gratulation. And have not some of us known something of a similar feeling in the course of our own inner life? Was there not a time when we woke

up to find ourselves in terrible danger, and indeed were driven to despair of helping ourselves, or escaping by our own futile strugglings out of the hand of the destroyer. Robbed and injured, and threatened with still graver evils, we found ourselves reduced to the sorest straits, and nothing that the world-spirit could do for us could relieve us from our misery or our peril. Some of you have known something of all this in your own personal experience. And then there came the moment of deliverance, when you were able to say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." Not by a Miltonic conflict between winged combatants, not by any display of divine omnipotence crushing down all opposition, but none the less by the most sublime deed of heroism that ever was performed, deliverance came. Our wistful gaze turned at last towards the cross of Calvary, and there we saw our battle fought and won by Him whom man despised, whom the world crucified as a felon outside the gate. A new and not less alarming peril arose, and one they had neither foreseen nor even thought of in their first moments of joyous enthusiasm. It is heard with feelings of consternation that the infuriated king is preparing to march upon the ill-fated town, thus exposed to a new and not less terrible alarm. What was to be done? Their manner towards David becomes cold and restrained, and soon, no doubt, the rulers and elders of the town gather together in secret conclave to discuss how they were to deal with their former benefactor and friend. Meanwhile David also is making the discovery of his new danger. He has received the information from the Urim and Thummim, "Saul will certainly come down." And the sacred historian lets us into the secret cause of this hostile movement. On hearing of David's entry into Keilah, Saul had exclaimed, "God hath delivered him into my hand," etc. There is something very suggestive and instructive in all this. The entrance of Christ into our nature offers Satan his opportunity, and you may depend upon it he will use it. So soon as Jesus Christ is received into our hearts, and when we have admitted His royal claim, or even begun to recognize Him as the anointed Heir of all, the world will begin to marshal its forces against us; and the great object of the prince of the world is to induce us to commit just such an act of perfidy as Saul expected or desired from the men of Keilah. This much is sure, Saul will certainly come down. This spirit of rancorous hatred which animated Saul against David has been reproduced over and over again in the history of the Christian Church. This moved the heathen of old in their persecution of the primitive Christians; and those who confessed Christ in those days, and were true to Him, knew well that in every city bonds and imprisonments, and perhaps even torture and death, awaited them. And when persecution is not thus public and open, it is often none the less cruel. I have known of fathers in affluent circumstances who have threatened to cut their sons off with a shilling if they did not give up their religion, and who have proved as good as their word. Amongst our friends in our home circle, in society, in the workshop, in the regiment, on sea or land, they who are true to their divine Master are exposed to the bitter animosity and relentless persecution of the world. And let us remember that the persecution that takes the form of ribald scorn or refined contempt is less easily tolerated by many natures than more violent measures of persecution. To return to the men of Keilah, whom we left in solemn conclave assembled to consider this new danger, and how it was to be met. I fancy I can see one shrewd and keen-looking old man rising up amongst his neighbours to give his view of the matter—a sort of moral anticipation of the counsel of Caiaphas. "It is a very simple and a very practical question that we are about to decide, my friends, and I will put it thus in a single sentence: Is one man to perish, or the city? That is the question in its naked simplicity. Some will, I dare say, talk very sentimentally of the brave thing David has done, and of the debt of gratitude we owe him. Well, that may be all very fine as a matter of sentiment; but this is a business meeting, and our wisdom will lie in taking a calm, dispassionate, businesslike view of the matter. We have, of course, to consider our own interests. We are in a work-a-day sort of world, and we must regard everything from a business point of view. Three courses are open to us. Either to fight David's battle, and share David's fate, sacrificing our lives, or flying with him to the mountains of the wild goats, leaving our city to be spoiled by the conqueror. Our next course is to give David a word of warning, and tell him of our dilemma. That may seem a right thing to do; but if Saul knows that we have done it we shall bring down his indignation on our heads, and the probability is that he will vent his fury on the men of Keilah; so that our case will be just as bad as it would be

if David were within our walls. The third course, and to my mind it is the only sensible one, is to make up our mind that when the time comes we will deliver David up to his master, and to intimate this our intention at once to Saul. Whatever may come of this, the responsibility will be with Saul, and not with us; we shall only have acted as our circumstances compelled us to do. Of course we are very sorry for David, and of course we all feel profound regret at having to treat a man so, who has been very useful to us. But then, you know, as I have said, we must consider ourselves. This is our only chance of safety, and we must make the most of it. We may not like doing it, but we all have to do a great many things that we don't like." And while they are thus deliberating, there is David alone with God and his priest. The ephod is brought out, and the enquiry is made, "Will Saul come down?" and the answer is, "He will come down." David's heart sinks within him. "O Lord!" he asks a second time, "will the men of Keilah deliver me up and my men into the hands of Saul?" And from the mystic breastplate the inexorable answer is returned, "They will deliver thee up." I wonder if that was the moment when David said in his haste, "All men are liars." At any rate, I do not suppose he ever entertained a lower estimate of humanity than at that moment. These fervent thanks, expressed with so much emotion, were only empty breath after all. What a miserable world it is! Honour and manliness seem vanished from it, and truth has sped her flight. It must have been a sad moment; and which of us would not have felt for him? But stay. Have we no similar feelings for another "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" another, to whom we ourselves owe far more than the men of Keilah ever owed to David? It comes to pass that not a few Christians who have once known something of the great deliverance, and rejoiced in God's salvation, prove false to their Master in the hour of trial, that they may escape the world's hostility. They throw open the gates of Mansoul to the world, and so betray their Master into the hands of His foe by betraying His cause. You may be sure that the first care of the world-spirit when thus invited to enter and take possession of our nature will be, so to speak, to assassinate his rival, and Christ will desert the desecrated fane, and leave the soul to its new false friends. (W. Aitken, M.A.)

Ver. 16. And Jonathan . . . went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.—*The true in life* :—Two lessons stand out in this chapter. First, that the most heroic heart may sometimes be overcome with fear. Few men had a more intrepid soul than the conqueror of Goliath; yet now he was driven by fear of Saul into the wood. We are subject to variations of mood. Secondly, that the crimes of a father may alienate the hearts of his children. Jonathan the son of Saul was now succouring the man whom his own sire hated, and sought to destroy. Evil, even in a parent, cannot be loved, nor wrong in a parent obeyed. I. **THE DEEP DEPRESSION OF A TRUE SOUL.** Few men ever had a truer soul than David—clear in its perceptions of truth, strong in its attachments to truth, inflexible in its allegiance to truth. But that soul, in the "wood" here, is under depression. Several things tend to depress the true spirit in this world. 1. Seemingly adverse circumstances. Jacob: "All these things are against me." 2. Providential discrepancies. Job, Asaph. "My foot had well nigh slipped." 3. Non-success in religious service. 4. Consciousness of moral unworthiness. 5. Physical infirmities. II. **THE DISTINGUISHING POWER OF A TRUE MAN.** What is the distinguishing power which a true man has? To destroy life! Brutes can do this. To weaken faith, and shake confidence? A child can do this. What then? To strengthen a brother's heart in God! This is what Jonathan did now in "the wood." But how can a true man strengthen a depressed brother thus? 1. By a truthful exposition of God's method of governing the fallen in this world. The Gospel unfolds that method; shows that it is to the true corrective, not penal. 2. By a practical expression of genuine sympathy. One breath of it infuses new life to the soul. 3. By a devout intercession with Heaven. III. **THE HIGHEST FUNCTION OF A TRUE FRIEND.** It is one thing to have the power to strengthen, and another thing to use it when and where required. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 17. I shall be next unto thee.—*A sermon to boys* :—This conduct of the king's son teaches some important lessons. 1. Stand by the weak and defenceless. There is no nobler feature in any boy's character than a deter-

mination to do this. 2. We also learn to be content with a lower place when God has clearly marked out another for a higher. Jonathan saw that God was with David, and he made his own conduct to serve God's purpose. Be always on the look out to render others service. Fear not the taunts of men or the frowns of the world. Take Christ as your pattern. For yourselves do not forget that unselfishness is the ornament of every true man, the mark of every true gentleman, the essence of pure religion, and the germ of an undying character. (*Arthur Vinter.*)

CHAPTER XXIV.

Vers. 3—22. **Where was a cave and Saul went in . . . and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.**—*Saul and David in the cave*:—Saul's animosity is a fire that finds constant fuel. No sooner are the Philistines repulsed than he resumes his hunt for his prey. That Saul should know so well where to look for David seems to imply that traitors were among the wanderer's followers. Misinterpreted providence refused in wisdom. Saul's unexpected appearance thus unguarded would appear to David's men as decidedly a providence. Calling to mind the meaning of the Divine anointing and the promise that David should come to the throne of Israel, they whisper, "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee" (ver. 4). If Psalm vii. belongs to this period, we see how great the conflict with self before this temptation. The history furnishes us with much light concerning David. 1. His tenderness of conscience is noticeable. His heart smote him for thus doubting God and stooping to dishonour His anointed king (ver. 5). 2. His conscious integrity adds force to his words. How tenderly he pleads with Saul (ver. 9). How tremulous with righteousness are his words (ver. 11). 3. What dignity there is in truth! and withal his humility must be noticed. (ver. 14). It was as if he had said, "I shall not antedate the promise. God has said He will bring me to the throne. I shall wait." (ver. 15). Such a time was filled with tests—a sudden opportunity to reach the desire of the heart, and an appeal to passion in the name of religion. He stood the strain. He lost not his self-command. Nearly all our falls come from trying to go before God! (*H. E. Stone.*) *David sparing his enemy*:—This scene is an episode in the life of David, whom God had chosen to succeed Saul as the king of Israel. 1. The cave. In all limestone countries such caves are common, and many of them are large enough to conceal armies. The Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and Weyer's Cave in Virginia are large enough to shelter a hundred thousand men. Bruce's Cave in Scotland is still shown to tourists, and history tells how Mohammed once saved his life by running into one of these mountain-caves. But in this cave at Engedi we have the marvellous escape of Saul as an act of gracious forbearance on the part of David. 2. The meeting. In the solitude of that cave, by the mysterious providence of God, are these two men, Saul and David. Saul hated David as Haman hated Mordecai, or as Herod hated Jesus when the wise men told him that a King was born in Bethlehem. 3. David restrained. It must have been a great provocation to stand there and see his inveterate enemy ungird his mantle and compose himself to sleep. But David was a man of war, brave as the lion. He was made of nobler stuff than assassins are made of. He was too much of a man to kill a king when asleep, as Richard hired men to kill the princes of England that he might ascend the throne. 4. The final appeal. "But I say unto you, love your enemies." We would hardly expect to find a fulfilment of such a sentiment in that rude age of the world. Lessons:—1. Sin hardens. Sin puts a man in antagonism to God, makes him hate the rule of God, and makes him ignore and despise the mercy of God, and at last brings him to confront the unmitigated vengeance of God. 2. The subduing and restraining power of God's grace. (*T. W. Hooper, D.D.*) *David sparing his enemy*:—David illustrates the peacemaker. I. IN HIS FORBEARANCE. Those were times of quick and savage deed. Human life was cheap. Tender sensibilities had slight leave among a people, every one of whom wore his sword on thigh, ready, on occasion, to pierce with it

the heart of an offender. The spirit of the age demanded speedy redress of injury or insult. And here was one who, above all others, had signalized himself as gifted with courage and strength in conflict. The wrongs we have suffered do rankle mightily, till an unearthly nature has been created within us. To "forgive, but not forget," is the veriest empty form of words. Philip of Burgundy, being entreated to punish a prelate who had injured him, may seem to have given a holy rule in his reply, "It is a fine thing to have revenge in one's power, but it is a finer thing not to use it." And a finer yet, is it not, to have no spirit of resentment burning within, however it may be repressed? Another characteristic of the peacemaker which gave David a right to the title was: II. HIS CONSCIENTIOUSNESS. Though he would not harm his foe in the least, yet he did think best to obtain proof that he could have slain him if he would. We commend his prudence. But no sooner had the rent been made in the royal mantle than "his heart smote him." He had lifted his hand against his fellow; if not to cut off his head, at least somewhat his dignity. The Rabbis declare that he expiated this sin in his old age, by finding no warmth in the clothes wherewith he wrapped himself. He opened his inmost heart to his murmuring associates, and we are surprised that this bronzed soldier betrays the finer sentiments of humanity. The beating of a reverent, loving heart, seeking ever to be cleansed from secret faults, is felt through all this story of trial. As the string of the piano vibrates when its kindred note is sounded by other instrument or voice, so does this brief protest of a conscience, ages since, stir the reader's in quick unison, as we learn that the standards of right and wrong are eternal. The peacemaker like David is—III. LOYAL TO RULERS. Saul had been sought out by the aged prophet, and the vial of oil had been poured upon his head. Henceforth he was a representative of Jehovah. Affront, disobedience, disrespect shown to him, was dishonour to God as well. Let him betray his trust; let him, like the stork in the fable, eat up his subjects; let him be a Herod, a Nero, a Charles, an Ashantee chief, an Alexander IV.; still, the authority of his office, when once he holds it, is sacred, and must be maintained. So David reasoned, and would not for a moment think of retaliation. What a lesson of self-control and chivalrous devotion was that to the impatient, hating victims of oppression in every age! God's time and God's way may best be waited for. The chief attribute of the peacemaker David was—IV. SIMPLE TRUST IN GOD. In this instance, as before and afterwards, we find him, in full view of danger, committing his case to the Lord, whom he prayed to "judge between me and thee, and plead my cause and deliver me out of thine hand." Such confidence is a sublime reality. (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

Ver. 11. I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not.—*David sparing Saul's life*:—We are taught:—I. THANKFULNESS FOR PRESERVATION IN SLEEP. II. ATTENTION TO CONSCIENCE IN LITTLE THINGS. When Saul slept in the cave at Engedi David spared his life, but not the skirt of his robe. That was cut off, to be visible token to the king of his exposure to David's power. It was a little thing to do, and from one urged to a great and deadly. But his "heart smote him." He had a conscience in little things. He must be stringent in obedience to it. Would that he always had been! Little things! So we speak. But these make the staple of life. This is the great need—for Christian men to reverence conscience in so-called little things, in all things. Home-life tenderer, purer, friendship firmer, business more honest and unselfish—these are "evidences of Christianity" which the enemy cannot gainsay or resist. III. THE CRUELTY OF SLANDER. IV. THE PATIENCE OF FAITH. David "believed God." The crown was Divinely assured him. He could wait God's time for it. V. THE TRUTH OF REPENTANCE. Saul shed tears enough, and made vows enough. But it availed nothing. Quick to repent, he was quick to fall into the old sin. Soon, in spite of solemn protestations, we find him again pursuing David. The truth of repentance is not to be read in tears. (*G. T. Coster.*)

Ver. 16. And Saul lifted up his voice and wept.—*A triple victory*:—Those who form the most careful plans for the defeat of others are often defeated themselves. Pharaoh persecuted and pursued the children of Israel, but he perished through his own folly—Haman and Mordecai—Judas and Christ. Saul hunted for David like a thirsty bloodhound, but imperilled his own life by entering the cave in which David and his men had concealed themselves. How did David

treat his enemy in the hour of his weakness? I. DAVID SHOWED THE MOST GRACIOUS TREATMENT TO AN INVETERATE ENEMY. We may learn two things from this gracious forbearance. 1. That it is the duty of Christian men to forgive their enemies. 2. Christian men are benefited by forgiving their enemies. Forgiveness improves both the heart of the offended and the offender. Life is ennobled by little acts of forbearance, and the heart made bright and glad. A desire for revenge is a sure sign of weakness. Revenge is its own torment. II. DAVID GAINED A MOST DECISIVE VICTORY OVER AN INVETERATE ENEMY. Kindness conquered. Love won. "Saul lifted up his voice and wept." 1. Saul was convinced of sin. The hardest heart is sometimes softened. The iceberg melts before the sun. Awakened, ashamed, but not reclaimed. 2. Saul confessed his sin. "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Bad men must confess their sin. They may conceal their true character for a time, but "truth will out." The secret diary of the heart will be opened and read. III. HOW DID DAVID OBTAIN THIS THREE-FOLD VICTORY? 1. He conquered by constant vigilance. 2. He conquered by earnest prayer. (*J. T. Woodhouse*.) *The reconciliation of Saul*:—I. WHILEST THE GOOD MAN SEES HIS OWN PERILS, LET HIM ALSO SEE THE RESTRAINTS WHICH ARE PUT UPON THE WICKED. Saul is mighty; Saul has servants; Saul is accustomed to dip his sword in human blood; yet he cannot hit David! II. LET THE BAD MAN PUT TO HIMSELF SOME SERIOUS QUESTIONS RESPECTING THE RESTRAINTS WHICH LIMIT HIS POWER. Saul should have learned a good deal from the failures which followed each other in rapid succession. Why do the heathen so furiously rage? Evil is a gigantic failure: is there not a cause? III. THOUGH MEDIATION MAY FAIL IN CARRYING OUT ITS PURPOSES, YET LET NO WISE MEDIATOR SUPPOSE THAT HIS WORK IS IN VAIN. Jonathan was mediator between Saul and David. Looking at it on one side, he might well have abandoned his work as a failure. What of its influence upon David? How it cheered him like a light! Be some man's true friend. No word of love is lost. No true ministry is a failure, though it may have aspects which are discouraging. IV. OBSERVE THE INFINITE SUPERIORITY OF POWER THAT IS MORAL, AS COMPARED WITH POWER THAT IS PHYSICAL. Saul went to seek David upon the rocks of the wild goats. In his pursuit he came to the sheepcotes where there was a cave, and into that cave he entered, little knowing who was there! Saul lifted up his voice and wept! What a difference between this and a mere fight of hostile weapons! 1. In the worst men there is something that may be touched. 2. In every life there is at least one opportunity of showing the real quality of the heart. David seized it! This is the sublime appeal of the Gospel! God does not crush us by mere power. Love, truth, persuasion—these are the weapons of God's warfare! (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1. *And Samuel died, and all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him.*—"When I die, will I be missed?"—"And Samuel died; and all Israel lamented him." What an epitaph! What a character to have deserved such an epitaph! The humblest mortal can so live as to leave a gap when he goes—a fact we realise with difficulty, for we say, "Oh! the great ones are missed, but I am poor and humble; my attainments are so insignificant." No life need be insignificant. "And Samuel died; and all Israel lamented for him." Some poor housewife in far Beersheba, who had never been five miles from home, when the word comes that Samuel is dead, she goes to the corner, lifts her apron to her eyes and weeps. Such is the result of a good life. We do not know how far its influence may travel. Are we not all of us largely influenced by men and women whose faces we have never seen, whose voices we have never heard? Do they not lead us, cheer us, inspire us on our way? 1. The self-forgetting life. We want to learn to do good quietly, unostentatiously. 2. Joy in daily tasks. 3. Disinterested virtue. To live a good life in order to be missed, and nothing more, is one thing. But to live it without any such intention is

another. Our virtue must be disinterested. 4. The life of service. So we speak of the useful life as the true one. The ideal life is that of consecrated service. Is there anyone living in loneliness who will say: "When I had not a friend in the world, when I came up from some country place and went into a certain church, that man befriended me?" 5. Active religion. "And Samuel died, and all Israel wept for him." We, too, must die. Will men weep for us? Will the world be sorry, or will he clap his hands? (*Ebenezer Rees.*)

Ver. 3. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail.—*Nabal, the churl*:—I. NABAL, THE CHURL. What an apt thumb-nail sketch is given of the whole race of Nabals in the confidential remark passed between his servant and his wife, "He is such a son of Belial that one cannot speak to him!" 1. He was very great. There are four kinds of greatness; young men, choose the best for your life aim! It is little to be great in possessing; better to be great in doing; better still to conceive and promulgate great thoughts; but best to be great in character. 2. He was a fool, his wife said. He surely must have sat for the full length portrait of the fool in our Lord's parable, who thought his soul could take its ease and be merry because a few big barns were full. 3. He was a man of Belial, his servant said. He seems to have had no compunction for his churlish speeches: no idea of the consequences they might involve. As soon as the words were spoken, they were forgotten; and in the evening of the day on which they were spoken we find him in his house, holding a feast, like the feast of a king, his heart merry with wine, and altogether so stupid that his wife told him nothing less or more till the morning light. II. DAVID, PRECIPITATE AND PASSIONATE. One of the most characteristic features in David's temper and behaviour through all these weary years was his self-control. But the rampart of self-restraint built by long habit went down, like a neglected sea wall, before the sudden paroxysm of passion which Nabal's insulting words aroused. At this hour David was on the brink of committing a crime which would cast a dark shadow on all his after years. In calmer, quieter, holier hours it would have been a grief to him. From this shame, sorrow, and disgrace he was saved by that sweet and noble woman, Abigail. III. ABIGAIL, THE BEAUTIFUL INTERCESSOR. She was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance—a fit combination. Her character had written its legend on her face. There are many beautiful women wholly destitute of good understanding; just as birds of rarest plumage are commonly deficient in the power of song. It is remarkable how many Abigails get married to Nabals. God-fearing women, tender and gentle in their sensibilities, high-minded and noble in their ideals, become tied in an indissoluble union with men for whom they can have no true affinity, even if they have not an unconquerable repugnance. To such an one there is but one advice—You must stay where you are. The dissimilarity in taste and temperament does not constitute a sufficient reason for leaving your husband to drift. It may be that some day your opportunity will come, as it came to Abigail. In the meantime do not allow your purer nature to be bespotted or besmeared. Nabal's servants knew the quality of their mistress, and could trust her to act wisely in the emergency which was upon them; so they told her all. She immediately grasped the situation, despatched a small procession of provision-bearers, along the way that David must come, and followed them immediately on her ass. She met the avenging warriors by the covert of the mountain, and the interview was as creditable to her woman's wit as to her grace of heart. Frank and noble as he always was, he did not hesitate to acknowledge his deep indebtedness to this lovely woman, and to see in her intercession the gracious arrest of God. What a revelation this is of the ministries with which God seeks to avert us from our evil ways! They are sometimes very subtle and slender, very small and still. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Vers. 4—13. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.—*Nabal the churl*:—David never made a wiser choice, and he never said a truer thing, than when he exclaimed, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord (for His mercies are great), and let me not fall into the hand of man." The history of David's collision with Nabal furnishes us with a twofold confirmation of the truth of David's assertion and the wisdom of his decision. David, in a season of feebleness, sought to rest himself upon Nabal's gratitude, and he found that he was trusting in the staff of a broken reed which pierced

him. In his necessity he made an appeal to Nabal's generosity, and he found it was as vain as trying to quench his thirst with the waters of Marah. On the other hand, Nabal's ingratitude and unkindness met with no charity at first on the part of David. While Nabal was utterly destitute of brotherly kindness, David failed for a time in the love which is not easily provoked. "Whether it be for the relief of our necessities, or for the pardon of our transgressions, let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great." Everything around Nabal was calculated to make him a happy, thankful, sweet-tempered, and kind-hearted man. He had good blood in his veins; and by the memories of his noble and godly ancestor he ought to have been restrained from all that was mean and graceless. The inspired writer alludes to his ancestry as if that increased the guilt of his conduct. "He was of the house of Caleb;" but he was a bad branch growing out of a good stock, for "he was churlish and evil in his doings." Alas! he was neither the first nor the last of those who have come into possession of many of the temporal results of their fathers' piety, but have shamefully repudiated the godliness which brought the golden harvest. The Bible makes the nobleness of a man's ancestry one more reason why he should serve the Lord and cleave to Him with full purpose of heart. The prophet Jeremiah went with words of sharp rebuke and heavy condemnation to one who was proving himself a degenerate son of a godly sire, "Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it." Nabal had what many would deem a far more substantial reason for personal goodness than the fact that he belonged to the house of Caleb. The wealth which had come down to him had evidently been increased by the Divine blessing on his own endeavours, and he stood forth conspicuous above all his neighbours for the splendour and luxury with which he could surround himself. "The man was very great," but his prosperity hardened his heart and filled his spirit with haughtiness. The arrogance of spirit, and coarseness of speech, and niggardliness of heart, which Nabal displayed, were unmistakeable proofs that in his prosperity he had forgotten the God to whom he was indebted for it. Hence that which should have made his lowliness to grow and blossom like a lily of the valley, did only serve to make his poisonous pride flourish like the deadly nightshade, and that which should have filled him with grateful love to God and generous love to men, only helped to increase his self-indulgence and his self-idolatry. There was another reason why better things might have been reasonably expected of Nabal. God had given him a true help-meet—a woman who, if he had yielded to her influence, would have done much to lift him out of his roughness and wickedness into refinement and godliness. It is one of the marvels of human nature that some rough and selfish men can live for year after year in fellowship with gentle and self-denying women, and yet be no more impressed and improved by them than the dead heart of Absalom was moved by the tears and wailings of his disconsolate father. If such men die impenitent and unpardoned, surely for them condemnation will be heavy and perdition will be deep! David was in danger of perishing for lack of a little of that of which Nabal had such an abundance, and therefore the appeal for relief was sent. Amongst the Jews, and other Eastern peoples, the time of sheep-shearing was commonly the season of special liberality. Beside the force of good old customs, there was another reason why on that particular day David's solicitation was seasonable. It was partly on the ground that his men had been guardians of the flocks that David rested his appeal, and there could not be a better time for that appeal than the season when the flocks were counted and the fleeces were gathered. Many have thought that the prudence and policy of David's conduct were more obvious than its dignity. Did he not in some measure demean himself, they ask, by setting forth so fully the services he had rendered? It is not usual, they say, to do a man a good turn, and then to go and tell him all about it, and ask for some grateful recognition of it. Before we blame David for being undignified, let us try to realize his position and his temptations. He must have been in great straits, or he would never have sent in such a way to a man like Nabal. There are people whom you cannot fully know until you ask them for something. While no direct appeal is made to their supposed benevolence, their real character is masked; but the moment you press them to be generous, despite all their efforts to wear it still, the covering drops off, and they stand forth in all their native unsightliness. To what a revelation of Nabal's heart the prayer of David led! Nabal could not say it was the wrong

day for charity, so he said this was a wrong case. Such people are never destitute of reasons for not giving, and are not ashamed to try and cover their niggardliness with excuses so flimsy that even the sight of a bat would be strong enough to pierce them. If he had been placed in circumstances like Abraham, and angels had come to partake of his hospitality, he would probably have cried out, "Give my bread and flesh to people with wings! What next, I wonder!" The provocation to David must have been great, and we are more grieved than surprised that at once his soul was all on fire with wrath. David forgot how much God had done for Nabal, what ingratitude God had received at Nabal's hand, and yet how patiently God had borne with him for many years, and how lavishly God had blessed him despite all his guiltiness. We might have hoped that, instead of fostering human vengeance, David would have striven to imitate Divine long-suffering; but the wisest men are not always wise, and the best men are not always consistent. The history shows, what is very credible, that Nabal was a great coward as well as a coarse blusterer. When he heard of David's indignation "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone." It would seem as if the weight of his own craven fears helped to sink him into the grave. Possibly his own cowardice was the instrument with which the Lord smote him; and the terrors of his guilty spirit were the disease of which he died. This much is certain, he perished for his sins. The very day wherein he refused relief to those who had befriended him, "he held a feast in his house like the feast of a king." He was utterly wanting in meekness and gentleness, courtesy and kindness. He would indulge himself even to gluttony and drunkenness, and yet refused his bread to those who were ready to perish. His name has become imperishable by being written in the book which is to be translated into every tongue and read in every land; but the immortality which Scripture has given him is an immortality of infamy. (C. Vince.)

Ver. 11. Shall I then take my bread, and my water.—*Avarice of Nabal*:—Such is still the language of the avaricious man; such are still the excuses made by the insensible heart, when it seeks some pretext to exempt it from relieving the wants of the unhappy. Let us consider the frivolity of these his excuses. I. EXCUSE MADE BY NABAL: MY POSSESSIONS ARE STRICTLY AND PROPERLY MY OWN, AND I HAVE A RIGHT TO EMPLOY THEM AS I PLEASE. "Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh." This is also an excuse that we still hear daily presented by the covetous and uncharitable. But common as is this excuse, it is not only demonstrably false, but also awfully impious, and strikes directly at the providence, the government, and the sovereignty of the Most High God. Not Your wealth is not your own: natural, as well as revealed religion, declares that you are only stewards. II. EXCUSE OF NABAL: THE SUPPOSED INFERIORITY OF THOSE FOR WHOM HIS ASSISTANCE WAS SOLICITED, AND HIS WANT OF RELATIONSHIP TO HIM. "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master." This excuse also is still daily presented, when we plead for the distressed. There can be little doubt, that the ignorance of Nabal was only pretended, that he might render his reply more contemptuous. He well knew the valour and reputation of David. Do you add, with Nabal, "Who is David?" "Who are these poor orphans? What relationship are they to me, that I should assist them?" They have descended from the same parent with you; their origin is your own. In them as well as you, there is a soul endued with wonderful faculties; a soul destined to endless happiness or eternal misery. III. EXCUSE OF NABAL: HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO ENCOURAGE VICE OR INDOLENCE. "There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master!" This excuse too we often hear when we ask relief for the distressed. "Shall I give?" Yes: because of the instability of all earthly things. Do you still ask with Nabal, "Shall I give?" Yes; consider the day of trouble and bestow your benefaction. "Shall I give?" Yes; if you wish your memory to be cherished by your survivors. "Shall I give?" Yes! for the judgment-day is approaching: and then: what unutterable anguish, what agonising horror, shall convulse the heart of him who "shall receive judgment without mercy, because he hath showed no mercy!" (H. Kollock, D.D.) *The Message of the Church to men of wealth*:—An awful and uncertain spectacle, but the spectacle which is exhibited in every country where Rights are keenly felt and Duties lightly regarded—where insolent demand is met by insulting defiance. Where-

ever classes are held apart by rivalry and selfishness instead of drawn together by the Law of Love—wherever there has not been established a kingdom of heaven, but only a kingdom of the world—there exist the forces of inevitable collision. I. **THE CAUSES OF THIS FALSE SOCIAL STATE.** 1. False basis on which social superiority was held to rest. Throughout Nabal's conduct was built upon the assumption of his own superiority. He was a man of wealth. David was dependent on his own daily efforts. Now observe two things. (1) An apparent inconsistency in David's conduct. One injury from Nabal, and David is striding over the hills to revenge his wrong with naked steel. How came this reverence and irreverence to mix together? We reply. Saul had a claim of authority on David's allegiance: Nabal only one of rank. Between these the Bible makes a vast difference. It says, The powers which be are ordained of God. But upper and lower, as belonging to difference in property are fictitious terms: true, if character corresponds with titular superiority; false, if it does not. (2) This great falsehood respecting superior and inferior, rested on a truth. There had been a superiority in the wealthy class once. In the patriarchal system wealth and rule had gone together. It is a fallacy in which we are perpetually entangled. We expect reverence for that which was once a symbol of what was revered, but is revered no longer. No. That patriarchal system has passed for ever. 2. A false conception respecting Rights. It would be unjust to Nabal to represent this as an act of wilful oppression and conscious injustice. He did what appeared to him fair between man and man. He paid his labourers. Why should he pay anything beyond stipulated wages? Recollect too, there was something to be said for Nabal. This view of the irresponsible right of property was not his invention. It was the view probably entertained by all his class. It had descended to him from his parents. They were prescriptive and admitted rights on which he stood. On the other hand, David and his needy followers were not slow to perceive that they had their rights over that property of Nabal's. In point of fact, David had a right to a share of Nabal's profits. The harvest was in part David's harvest, for without David it never could have been reaped. Here, then, is one of the earliest instances of the Rights of Labour coming into collision with the Rights of Property. Now when it comes to this, Rights against Rights, there is no determination of the question but by overwhelming numbers or blood. We find another cause in circumstances. Want and unjust exclusion precipitated David and his men into this rebellion. It is common enough to lay too much weight on circumstances. Circumstances of outward condition are not the sole efficient in the production of character, but they are efficient which must not be ignored. Favourable condition will not produce excellence: but the want of it often hinders excellence. It is true that vice leads to poverty: all the moralisers tell us that, but it is also true that poverty leads to vice. II. **THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH TO THE MAN OF WEALTH.** The message of the Church contains those principles of life which, carried out would, and hereafter will, realise the Divine Order of Society. 1. The spiritual dignity of man as man. Recollect David was the poor man, but Abigail, the high-born lady, admits his worth. Worth does not mean what a man is worth—you must find some better definition than that. That is the Church's message to the man of wealth, and a message which it seems has to be learned afresh in every age. It was new to Nabal. It was new to the men of the age of Christ. In His day, they were offended in Him, because He was humbly born. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" It is the offence now. They who retain those superstitious ideas of the eternal superiority of rank and wealth, have the first principles of the Gospel yet to learn. 2. The second truth expressed by Abigail was the Law of Sacrifice. She did not heal the grievance with smooth words. Starving men are not to be pacified by professions of good will. She brought her two hundred loaves, and her two skins of wine, her five sheep ready dressed, etc. A princely provision! Now this the Church proclaims as part of its special message to the rich. The Self-sacrifice of the Redeemer was to be the living principle and law of the self-devotion of His people. To the spirit of the Cross alone we look as the remedy for social evils. 3. The last part of the Church's message to the man of wealth touches the matter of rightful influence. Very remarkable is the demeanour of David towards Nabal, as contrasted with his demeanour towards Abigail. In the one case, defiance, and a haughty self-assertion of equality—in the other, deference, respect, and the

most eloquent benediction. It was not therefore, against the wealthy class, but against individuals of the class, that the wrath of these men burned. See then, the folly and the falsehood of the sentimental regret that there is no longer any reverence felt towards superiors. There is reverence to superiors, if only it can be shown that they are superiors. The fiercest revolt against false authority is only a step towards submission to rightful authority. Emancipation from false lords only sets the heart free to honour true ones. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. For he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.—*The bad-tempered man*:—In this chapter you find a perfect picture of a choleric, bad-tempered man. There is a saying "that the worst temper in the house always rules," and often it is so. I have seen father and mother weakly yielding to some boorish, ill-tempered child. You have met the workman who was feared by all his fellows because he was a churl, a sullen, violent-tempered man, a modern Nabal, which means a fool. What a picture of home-life is drawn for us here in this chapter. In the foreground is Nabal, the grumpy, sullen, beetle-browed, coarse-tongued, drunken husband—the prototype of hundreds of husbands of to-day, who rule in their own little world with all the despotism of a Nero, and who only need a larger platform and greater power to show us how inhuman, how cruel, and how like the devil men can become. That is Nabal in low life, but you find Nabal in high life, in political life, ay! and in church life too. And then there is Abigail, Nabal's wife, in the picture, and she is its redeeming feature. She is as tactful as she is beautiful, and she knew her husband's moods well, and she is always particularly gracious when the wind is in the east, and Nabal is most out of temper. "He's gey bad to live with," was the testimony of Carlyle's mother, and the reading of some of the letters his wife wrote are nothing less than heart-breaking. "If he would only be satisfied," she said, "but I have learned that when he does not find fault he is pleased, and that has to content me." Such a wife as Abigail is a crown to her husband; a daily blessing from God; but Nabal had the dark spirit within him, and never saw her worth. There are men who will go through a rose garden and never smell its sweet fragrance. Graciousness, and sweetness, and gentleness are wasted on such natures as Nabal's, but let those who have to deal with these churls remember that it is always worth while to practise these virtues, if only for their own sake. Abigail did not let Nabal destroy her good temper, although her married life was little better than a martyrdom. "The mind," Milton tells us, "is its own place, and it can make a heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven," and Abigail, denied the love of her husband, won the love and respect of the servants, and was a shelter in the time of storm to them. "Nabal," says Dr. Whyte, "died of a strange disease, indebtedness to his wife." He could not brook the thought that he owed his life to the good sense of his wife and to the forbearance of David; it was wormwood and gall, and it poisoned him, and he died of a heart frozen by his own wickedness. Have there not been times when our bad temper has ruled, and we have forgotten to be either just or generous? Nabal died of a frozen heart, but he has had a resurrection in many a life. Boorishness and churlishness were not buried in Nabal's grave. "Temper," says Bishop Watson, "is nine-tenths of religion." "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," pleads the Apostle. It is the Christ mind that is the great thing, not simply doing the right thing, but doing it in the right spirit. Nabal was a rich man, but he never was a gentleman; you could not make a gentleman out of such stuff as constituted Nabal's nature. Have you met him—this loud-voiced, blatant, well-dressed, overfed churl. A quaint old Methodist used to say, "Never judge a man by the size of his house. A very small rabbit may live in a very big hole." "Behaviour," says Emerson, "is the finest of the fine arts. Manners are the garments of the spirit, the eternal clothing of the being." Even religion turns sour with some men, and that which should spell light, brightness, and cheerfulness spells instead sourness, unrighteousness, and exclusiveness. You remember how Robert Falconer's grandmother hid away his fiddle, fearful lest the lad should be tempted by it into worldly things, never dreaming that God melts the heart of some by touching the bow of a fiddle with His own fingers, as He speaks to others by the voice of some great preacher. He has many ways of fulfilling Himself. How this churlishness destroys the best in life, and robs it of its

sweetness. The prodigal came home, and his reception would have been perfect but for the one thing, and that was his brother's churlishness. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "a man has no more right to say an uncivil thing than to act one; no more right to say a rude thing to another than to knock him down." Epictetus has left us a great lesson in his famous saying, "If a man is unhappy, remember that his unhappiness is his own fault; for God hath made all men to be happy." (*Samuel Horton.*)

Ver. 29. The soul of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of life.—

The bundle of life:—The imagery, of course, is Oriental. It is very true that the life of man is bounded up with the Divine; "bound up in the bundle of life," how expressive it is—tied to Him. The soul and life of man is in the bundle with the life of God. 1. This is the beginning of human history. There is but one life in the world, and that life pours itself out and becomes the life of man. And man's life is like the life of God, and it is, in its measure, the life of God. This life is very realistically described as being breathed out from the lips of the Almighty into the muscles of man. 2. Now this is something that gives us not only a very exalted idea of God, but a very exalted idea of man. I do not know of anything that needs to be more impressed upon us to-day than the dignity of human nature—let me change the word—the divinity of human nature. Nothing can exalt a man above the greatness of his nature, the greatness that is his because his life is a Divine life, his life is in the bundle of life with God. Let us remember this, that whatever happens, we are made of God's will, that God wanted us to be made, that He wanted us to be here. There is something we can do that nobody else could do, and that God's wealth in the world is the wealth of men and women who can meet Him, answering love with love, answering with wisdom and confidence and obedience. 3. It is very easy to see what comes out of this. There comes out of it on the one side God's great delight in us. "The Lord's portion is His people." As long as God is rich, we are rich, as long as God is happy we can be happy if we want to be. As long as God is wise we are wise if we want to be. We are in the bundle with Him. You are bound up in the bundle of life, whatever happens to you happens to Him, and if you choose to have it so, whatever happens to Him, according to the measure of your day, will happen to you. And God likes this trust, this confidence. The more we trust Him the more He is delighted in us. God depends upon us. We are in the bundle of life, and when we drop out of the bundle of life and leave God alone—well, did you ever have a child go out of your house and leave you? That is a little bit of the feeling that God has when we get out of the bundle of life, when we seek after pleasures which he has forbidden, when there is anything in our business that He does not approve. It is so ordained that while we are in the bundle of life with God we are free perfectly. We are not compelled to be there. You can get out of the bundle of life any time you want to. We find a great deal going on in the world that does not seem to be consistent with the bundle of God. How can there be all this misery if London is in the bundle with God? But all London is not in the bundle with God. It ought to be, it can be, but it has slipped away. Yet it is pretty plain that a good many of us have got outside the bundle of God. How does God regard it? How do you regard it? I would like to ask what would happen to God if you get out of the bundle. What would happen if your boy, whom you love a hundred times more than you love Him, got out of your bundle? From the first of Genesis we find how man slipped out of God's bundle. One day they came to Christ and found fault with Him because they said He ate and drank with publicans and sinners, and He turned and said, "You do just the same." "Oh, no," they said, "we never do such a thing." "Do you not? You have a hundred sheep and lose one—what do you do?" "I go after it to bring it back." "Why do you do that? Why do you not send someone else after it?" "Because it is my sheep." "Precisely. That publican, he is not 'a' publican; he is 'My' publican, 'My' sinner, 'My' boy." God is trying to get you back into the bundle. Every man who is unhappy, every man who does not love Christ and confess Him has dropped out of the bundle. Christ is trying to get him back into the bundle. (*A. McKenzie, D.D.*) *The bundle of life:*—It is a very beautiful expression, especially when you consider what the word bundle would mean in those times.

Nowadays we do not usually associate anything precious with a bundle. It is rather the other way. If a household were removing, for instance, it would be the odds and ends, the things of little value, that would likely be put into a bundle for convenience of removal. The precious things of the household would be secured in some safer way than by being simply huddled together in a bundle. A commercial traveller, in journeying by rail, would have his big bundles in the van, but anything particularly valuable would be carried by himself in pocket-book or hand-bag securely fastened. But in those primitive days they had not such elaborate means of securing safety. In shifting their tents to pastures new, any things of special value would simply be bound up in a bundle, and the husband or wife would see to it that that bundle was well looked after on the journey. It would be with them on their camel, or somewhere where they could always see it. Note, however, in passing, that other metaphor Abigail makes use of with regard to the enemies of David: "The souls of thine enemies, them shall He sling out, as out of the middle of a sling." It is a very forcible way of putting it. It just means emphatically the opposite of the care and attention connected with the bundle. What could be thought more lightly of than the stone slung out of a sling? So, the bundle implies that which is particularly valuable, whereas the stone slung out of a sling suggests that which is worthless, not worth taking any trouble or concern about. But let us direct our attention to the other wish that Abigail expresses regarding David. It is a beautiful thought, the thought of being bound in God's bundle of life. 1. Does it not, for one thing, imply, very specially, safety? They are safe who are bound in God's bundle of life. It is a great word in the Bible sense—safety—greater than we shall ever comprehend here. God's desire is to save men from themselves, from their sins, from their spiritual foes. 2. Another thought implied in the phrase, the bundle of life, is that of preciousness. So, in the bundle of life, we have to consider not man's but God's estimate of values. The neediest are, in a sense, the dearest. Look at the publicans of old as compared with the self-righteous Pharisees. 3. But one thing more also is suggested by the bundle, viz., that it will not always be a bundle. After all, the bundle is but a temporary arrangement. Only for the time being, when a household would be removing, would the valuables be packed up in a bundle, with little regard to arrangement and order. But in the new home the bundle would be opened, and each article put carefully in a place of its own. And so with God's opening and re-arranging of the bundle of life. The words of Abigail, in connection with David, seem to refer to the present life, to David's safety here from the foes that were assailing him. I am aware that the Jews, nowadays are in the habit of using the phrase in reference to the life beyond. But is it not more in harmony with the idea of a bundle to apply the phrase to the present life? It is here, not hereafter, that things are not as they should be, not as we would wish them to be; it is here that there is the medley and confusion of a bundle. The best and the worst are often in strange positions, and juxta-positions, in this world. And look, too, how those dear to us often get separated, far and wide in life. But the time will come when there shall be separation no more, "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." May that be our prayer and trust for us all, that, when all is over, so far as this world is concerned, it will not be for us a being slung out as out of the middle of a sling, but only the opening of the bundle, and the re-arrangement and final settlement in the eternal home. But remember, too, that while here, just as the contents of the good wife's bundle, though mixed together for the time being, would still be precious, and still safe, amid all the temporary disorder, so, even here, where things are oft inexplicably mixed, and many things are hard to understand, and harder still to bear, they are nevertheless safe and precious, now and evermore, in His sight, who are bound in God's bundle of life. (J. S. Mavor, M.A.)

Ver. 32. **Blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood.**—*Prevention of sin an invaluable mercy:*—These words are David's retraction, or laying down of a revengeful resolution; which for a while his heart had swelled with, and carried him on with the highest transport of rage to prosecute. By a happy and seasonable pacification, being taken off from

acting that bloody tragedy, which he was just now entering upon, and so turning his eyes from the baseness of him who had stirred up his revenge, to the goodness of that God who had prevented it; he breaks forth into these triumphant praises and doxologies, expressed in the text: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who has kept me this day from shedding blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand." Which words, together with those going before in the same verse, naturally afford us this doctrinal proposition, That prevention of sin is one of the greatest mercies that God can vouchsafe a man in this world. The prosecution of which shall lie in these two things: first, to prove the proposition; secondly, to apply it.

I. THAT TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS OF THIS SIN-PREVENTING MERCY IS DEMONSTRABLE FROM THESE FOUR FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS. 1. Of these in their order: and first, we are to take an estimate of the greatness of this mercy, from the condition it finds the sinner in, when God is pleased to vouchsafe it to him. It finds him in the direct way to death and destruction; and, which is worse, wholly unable to help himself. For he is actually under the power of a temptation and the sway of an impetuous lust; both hurrying him on to satisfy the cravings of it by some wicked action. It is a maxim in the philosophy of some, that whatsoever is once in actual motion, will move for ever, if it be not hindered. So a man, being under the drift of any passion, will still follow the impulse of it till something interpose, and by a stronger impulse turn him another way: but in this case we can find no principle within him strong enough to counteract that principle, and to relieve him. For if it be any, it must be either, first, the judgment of his reason; or secondly, the free choice of his will. But from the first of these there can be no help for him in his present condition. For while a man is engaged in any sinful purpose, through the prevalence of any passion, during the continuance of that passion he fully approves of whatsoever he is carried on to do in the strength of it; and judges it, under his present circumstances, the best and most rational course that he can take. (Jonas iv. 9; Acts xxvi. 9). But to go no further than the text! do we not think, that while David's heart was full of his revengeful design, it had blinded and perverted his reason so far, that it struck in wholly with his passion, and told him, that the purpose he was going to execute was just, magnanimous, and most becoming such a person, and so dealt with, as he was? 2. Thing proposed; which was to show, What is the fountain or impulsive cause of this prevention of sin? It is perfectly free grace. 3. Demonstration or proof of the greatness of this preventing mercy, taken from the hazard a man runs, if the commission of sin be not prevented, whether ever it will come to be pardoned. In order to the clearing of which, I shall lay down these two considerations. (1.) That if sin be not thus prevented, it will certainly be committed; and the reason is, because on the sinner's part there will be always a strong inclination to sin; so that if other things concur, and providence cuts not off the opportunity, the act of sin must needs follow. For an active principle, seconded with the opportunities of action, will infallibly exert itself. (2.) The other consideration is, that in every sin deliberately committed, there are, generally speaking, many more degrees of probability, that that sin will never come to be pardoned, than that it will. And this shall be made to appear upon these three following accounts. (1.) Because every commission of sin introduces into the soul a certain degree of hardness, and an aptness to continue in that sin. (2.) A second reason is, because every commission of sin imprints upon the soul a further disposition and proneness to sin: as the second, third, and fourth degrees of heat are more easily introduced than the first. Every one is both a preparative and a step to the next. Drinking both quenches the present thirst, and provokes it for the future. (3.) The third and grand reason is, because the only thing that can entitle the sinner to pardon, which is repentance, is not in the sinner's power. 4. The greatness of this preventing mercy is eminently proved from those advantages accruing to the soul from the prevention of sin, above what can be had from the bare pardon of it. And that in these two great respects: Of the clearness of a man's condition. Of the satisfaction of his mind. And (1.) For the clearness of his condition. If innocence be preferable to repentance, and to be clean be more desirable than to be cleansed; then surely prevention of sin ought to have the preference of its pardon. (2.) The satisfaction of a man's mind. There is that true joy, that solid and substantial comfort conveyed to the heart by preventing grace, which pardoning grace, at the best, very seldom,

and, for the most part, never gives. For since all joy passes into the heart through the understanding, the object of it must be known by one, before it can affect the other. Now when grace keeps a man so within his bounds, that sin is prevented, he certainly knows it to be so; and so rejoices upon the firm, infallible ground of sense and assurance. But on the other side, though grace may have reversed the condemning sentence, and sealed the sinner's pardon before God, yet it may have left no transcript of that pardon in the sinner's breast. The pardoned person must not think to stand upon the same vantage-ground with the innocent. It is enough that they are both equally safe; but it cannot be thought, that without a rare privilege, both can be equally cheerful.

II. ITS APPLICATION. 1. This may inform and convince us, how vastly greater a pleasure is consequent upon the forbearance of sin, than can possibly accompany the commission of it; and how much higher a satisfaction is to be found from a conquered, than from a conquering passion. Do we think, that David could have found half that pleasure in the execution of his revenge, that he expresses here upon the disappointment of it? 2. We have here a sure unfailing criterion, by which every man may discover and find out the gracious or ungracious disposition of his own heart. The temper of every man is to be judged of from the thing he most esteems; and the object of his esteem may be measured by the prime object of his thanks. 3. We learn from hence the great reasonableness of, not only a contented, but also a thankful acquiescence in any condition, and under the crossiest and severest passages of Providence which can possibly befall us: since there is none of all these but may be the instrument of preventing grace in the hands of a merciful God, to keep us from those courses which would otherwise assuredly end in our confusion. But to make the assertion more particular, and thereby more convincing, let us take an account of it with reference to the three greatest and deservedly most valued enjoyments of this life:—Health, reputation and wealth. He who ties a madman's hands, or takes away his sword, loves his person, while he disarms his frenzy. And whether by health or sickness, honour or disgrace, wealth or poverty, life or death, mercy is still contriving, acting, and carrying on the spiritual good of all those who love God and are loved by him. (*R. South.*) *Preventing grace*:—Nabal was under an obligation which ought in justice to have moved him to a hearty compliance. But an uneducated or low-minded rich man is almost proverbially insolent. Associate wealth with ignorance, and the likelihood is, that you make a rude and an overbearing character. Money in the possession of a rustic or clown will too often give him nothing but opportunity to exhibit at his ease the ruggedness of his disposition. Now, we desire to fix your attention chiefly on the fact, that David held it as a matter for devout thanksgiving, that he had been withheld from avenging himself on the insolent Nabal. And the great truth to be evolved from this is, that the being prevented from sinning is one of the greatest mercies which can be vouchsafed by God to man whilst on earth.

I. WE SHOULD LIKE YOU TO EXAMINE THIS WITH REFERENCE TO THOSE WHO REMAIN UNCONVERTED. Now, we believe it to be witnessed by the experience of all ages, that the mischief of a sinful act lies as much in the increased facility which it gives to future like acts as in the exact penalties which it entails on the perpetrator. The yielding to a temptation will occasion comparatively only slight injury, if after yielding once the man were as well equipped as ever for resistance; but the fearful thing is, that the first yielding just makes way for a second, and a second for a third, and a third for a fourth, it being impossible to commit sin without deadening in a degree the remonstrances of conscience, or at least without rendering oneself less sensitive to the appeal. You must be wonderfully unobservant of the testimony of your own experience, as well as ignorant of that given by the history of men, if you do not know that familiarity with sin will rapidly destroy all repugnance to its commission, and that as ye go on complying with an imperious desire there will be ever an augmenting facility of compliance. There is a very accurate correspondence between our physical constitution and our moral: the great pain in a surgical operation is at first, when the knife is near the surface; the sensitiveness decreases as the instrument descends: thus also with moral sensitiveness; we shrink from the first contact with any form of evil, but if once we overcome our repugnance the almost certainty is that we shall soon cordially embrace it; and if every act of wickedness smooth the way for its repetition, you must see at once of what worth is that preventing grace

of God by which a man is withheld from yielding to some potent temptation. If, then, when plied, like David, with a mighty temptation, soliciting to an act which, if performed, must sear and deaden his moral sensibilities, if preventing grace be mercifully vouchsafed, strengthening him to resist, there will be no Divine interference in his behalf which shall more powerfully constrain him to burst into the exclamation—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!" Indeed, I know what you may say. "The unconverted man may live to be converted; if he do, then preventing grace deprives him of a present pleasure, the guiltiness of which would be ultimately forgiven, and thus the injuriousness destroyed. Is this a benefit?" we will not go at length into the hundred answers which might be fairly given to this question. You cannot commit a sin, without introducing into the soul a certain degree of hardness, and an aptness to continue in that sin. This truth is finely expressed by an old writer, when he says, "Every act of sin strangely transforms and works over the soul to its own likeness, sin in this being to the soul like fire to combustible matter; it assimilates, before it destroys it. One visit is enough to begin an acquaintance, and this point is gained by it, that when the visitor comes again, he is no more a stranger." You go upon the supposition, that one year will be just as suitable for repentance as another—a supposition which, even if it involve not a long line of falsehoods, marks forgetfulness of the fact, that repentance is God's gift, and not man's achievement; and though it be a glorious truth, that God hath promised forgiveness to every one who repents, it is equally a truth, and that too of the most solemn import, that God hath not promised to give every one at every time grace to repent. Observe the diminished probability of any attempt after salvation, whilst every moral feeling grows more and more torpid. Remember that forasmuch as sin provokes and grieves the Holy Spirit, the very acts which make a sinner more need repentance make him more in danger of never obtaining it. And can you deny that of all the gifts which God pours down on an unconverted man there is none which can exceed preventing grace in its worth? II. But let us now examine THE CAUSE FOR THANKFULNESS WHICH PREVENTING GRACE FURNISHES TO THE CONVERTED. We have already allowed, that in the case of David there was a certainty that the sin, if committed, would have been pardoned; and we must equally confess, that those who are justified through faith in Christ Jesus are sure of finding their every offence forgiven at the last. It becomes, then, a question, though no great labour will be required for its answer, in what degree and in what respects a prevented sin has the advantage over a pardoned sin—why, that is, David, secure of forgiveness, had he gratified his passion, was bound to utter praises for having been withheld from the gratification. Now, whatever the likelihood, on a mere human calculation, that a man who feels himself safe for eternity will be careless of his practice, there is nothing more certain than that Scriptural belief in our own election will cause us to spurn the thought of continuing in sin that grace may abound. We do not deny that there may be equal safety, so far as the eternal state is concerned, whether the sin be committed and then pardoned, or whether it be prevented, so that forgiveness is not needed. But it is not possible that there should be equal assurance of safety; it is not possible that the Christian yielding to a temptation should have that clear proof of his calling which he had when enabled by grace to overcome that temptation. The proof, the only real proof, lies in the growing holiness; and undoubtedly, whenever evil gains the upper hand, there is so palpable an interruption to the sanctification of our nature, that there must be a suspension of the proofs of election; for there must, you should observe, be necessarily this great difference between preventing grace and pardoning grace—we may be quite sure of the application of the one in our own case, but not of the other. If I have been restrained from the commission of a sin to which I was tempted, I possess a proof not to be withstood, that I have been the subject of God's preventing grace; but if I yield to the temptation and commit the sin, I cannot pretend to an equally strong proof that I have been the subject of God's pardoning grace. We thus argue, and the argument, we think, will be responded to by the feeling of every true Christian, that pardon is not to be compared with prevention, on the simple principle, that a sin if committed, will, though pardoned, impair our evidence of justification, whereas, if prevented, it will rather enlarge and strengthen that evidence. Oh! we think quite wrongly, if we think that sin ever goes unpunished to the people of God. And then, again,

there is such a thing as the temporal punishment of a sin, as well as the eternal, and though the eternal be remitted, the temporal may be exacted. It is certain that faith in Christ does not put away from us the temporal consequences of sin, although it undoubtedly does the eternal. Conversion, for instance, will not repair the broken constitution of the debauchee; he must endure through the years of his godliness diseases of which he sowed the seeds in the years of his dissoluteness. It is the same in other particulars. If serenity of mind and repose of condition be in any degree precious—if the clear ministrings of God's favour be preferable to the tokens and actings of his anger—if, for such may often be the fact, the paying through long years the penalties of sin, in the tossings of a disturbed mind, the unkindnesses of friends, the bankruptcy of circumstances, the ingratitude of children, the wastings of sickness—these be less to be chosen than the spending those years in comparative calmness, surrounded by the bounties of mercy, in the full expectation and in the rich foretaste of joys laid up at God's right hand, then, though pardon be a great, an unspeakably great privilege, prevention vastly outdoes it in magnitude. Such are the applications which we would make of the truths which appear involved in the narrative of David's being intercepted by Abigail. We have only, in conclusion, to exhort earnestly all classes among you, that they never think lightly of sin, as though under any circumstances whatsoever it might be committed with impunity. (*H. Melvill, D.D.*) *The prevention of sin a great blessing*:—I. The first important practical instruction suggested is, **THAT THE PREVENTION OF SIN IS A GREAT BLESSING.** Let us attend to the state of the sinner's mind, at the time when he is arrested in his guilty career, when sin is prevented. The state of the sinner's mind at that time is one which, but for experience and observation, we would have declared to be utterly impossible in a reasonable being. It is a state which, we would have said, could be the result of nothing short of madness. What is the state of the mind, at the period when the sinner is prevented from executing his purpose? Why, the man is resolved to violate the Divine law; the rebel has his weapon in his hand, and is just about to hurl it at the Most High. The mind, at the period when the sinner is prevented from executing the guilty act that he is resolved on, is in actual determined rebellion against God. This was the case with the Jews in Egypt, when, in opposition to Jeremiah's expostulation, they distinctly avowed their determination in these remarkable words, "As for the words which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto them, but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth from out of our own mouth." I believe this state of mind is not often avowed; but it does not follow, on that account, that it is not often felt. But the truth that the prevention of sin is a great blessing will become still more apparent, if, turning from the state of the sinner's mind at the time sin is prevented, we allow ourselves to rest on the consequence, either direct, or necessary, or ultimate and probable, which would have resulted from the sin, if it had not been prevented. In medicine it is an axiom, that prevention is better than cure, and surely in morals it is also one, that innocence is better than reformation. There is, indeed, no such thing as absolute innocence in this world of guilt and misery; but so much as there is of preventive sin, so much is there of comparative innocence. God often does bring good out of evil; but God, with all his omnipotence (I speak it with reverence) cannot strip sin of its ruinous circumstances. Were that possible it would go to counteract all the purposes of His moral government. The prevention of a sin may produce consequences that may materially affect the individual during the whole of his life. This may suffice for the illustration of the first principle, that the prevention of sin is a great blessing. II. **THAT GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS BLESSING, AND THAT HIS SOVEREIGN KINDNESS SHOULD BE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY ALL ON WHOM IT HAS BEEN CONFERRED.** The first thought that occurred to David's mind was, what blessing he had received in the prevention of this sin; and the second was, that he had received it from God; and the third is, to Him be all glory. God is the author of the prevention of sin, in two ways; it is by the arrangement of His providence, that those events take place by which sin is prevented; and it is by the influence of His Spirit, that these events are rendered effectual for the purposes they are intended to serve. To be delivered from sin, is far more than to be delivered from excruciating pain, from fatal disease, or even from death itself. It is,

indeed, a manifestation of sovereign kindness, to arrest the individual in his mad career. These remarks throw a new light on human life. They make some of apparently the most unimportant events of our life become the most important, and render some of the most disastrous events the greatest blessings that ever could have befallen us. When a man is prevented from committing sin—and who has not often been prevented from committing sin?—the hand of God is always about him, and in mercy about him. You were in danger, it may be, of yielding to those youthful lusts which war against the soul, and God prevented your sin by chastening you, and making you say, Surely the hand of God was there in mercy. Such sovereign kindness demands grateful acknowledgment, and not only shows us, that many of the dispensations of Providence have a benignant character, which wear a very different aspect to our minds, but that much that we think unimportant, has indeed an awful solemnity in it. III. THAT IN CONFERRING THE BLESSING OF THE PREVENTION OF SIN, GOD USUALLY EMPLOYS THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF HUMAN AGENTS, WHO ARE ALSO ENTITLED TO THE GRATITUDE OF THOSE WHO, THROUGH THEIR MEANS, ARE PREVENTED FROM COMMITTING SIN. David, primarily, and principally, gave thanks to God, but not to God alone. He pours a benediction on the head of Abigail, the instrument of Divine agency, who, by her wise persuasives, had prevented him from carrying into execution his awful purposes, and plunging himself in guilt, it might be in ruin. God is always the author of the prevention of sin. But God ordinarily makes use of sundry means, and operates in a great variety of ways. Sometimes he employs no human agency, and, so far as we can perceive, no created agency. There are cases when the sinner, resolutely bent on violating the law of God, is just about to put forth his hand to commit the sinful deed, when it is withdrawn by an influence he cannot understand. In other cases, God makes use of human agency, but acting quite unconsciously so far as the prevention of sin is concerned. But more frequently God makes use of the conscious agency of man for the purpose of preventing sin. He did so in the present case. This is God's most ordinary method. It is very often by the wise advice of Christian parents, or ministers, or friends, that men are prevented from committing sin on which they had resolved; and in every case where means are used to prevent sin, and where these are effectually used, a heavy debt of gratitude is contracted to the human instrument as well as to the Divine agent. Look what a striking demonstration we have of the madness that is in the heart of man, in that, while we can scarcely meet with one who is not grateful to the physician for what he does to ward off disease from his frame, means cannot be used, in very many cases at least, to prevent men from sinning, without being resented as injuries and insults! This must not prevent us from following our course. Even though in but a few instances we meet with that grateful acknowledgment David made to Abigail, this is more than recompense for the number that disappoint us; and we know, that if we act from a principle of genuine love to God and man, we will in nowise lose our reward. (*John Brown, D.D.*)

Ver. 33. **And blessed be thy advice.**—*Good advice*:—I. IT IS WELL TO BE READY TO TAKE ADVICE. The older we grow the more ready most of us are to be advised regarding our plans and purposes. We know better the wisdom of being so. It is generally the young who scorn advice. They are apt to think they know everything that needs to be known. II. IT IS IMPORTANT TO GO TO THE BEST SOURCES FOR ADVICE. If you were in doubt as to your way in London, the best plan would be to ask a policeman. He is generally an authority on such a matter, and would be sure to give you correct and civil instructions. When people are in ill-health they go to the doctor for medical advice, and in any legal difficulty they naturally apply to the lawyer. It is worse than useless to get advice from the incompetent, that may only land you in deeper difficulty, or more hopeless trouble. "With the well advised is wisdom," says Solomon. It would have been a good thing for his son Rehoboam had he paid attention to that. How much it means to have a good adviser to go to, and especially in the earlier years of life! Every one thinks with pity of any young girl left motherless, who grows up without that counsel and guidance and sympathy so much needed in her young life, and which none so well as a mother can give. And now, if not then, we can heartily use David's words, and say, "Blessed be thy advice." III. ABOVE ALL, IN SPIRITUAL THINGS, WE NEED ADVICE. We can't devise and scheme and succeed

there all by ourselves. It is often said in the story of David's life, that he "inquired of the Lord." (*Christian World Pulpit*.)

CHAPTER XXVI.

Vers. 1—25. Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah.—*The reproach of the enemy*:—Dr. Maclaren is specially emphatic in connecting Psa. vii. with this part of David's history, and indicates its value in helping us to understand the rapid vacillations in Saul's behaviour. 1. It is headed Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord. That is, it is an irregular ode; like a stream broken over a bed of rocks and stones, expressing by its uneven measure and sudden changes the emotion of its author. We have often to sing these Shiggaion metres; our songs are frequently broken with sighs and groans. Happy are they who can find themes for singing to the Lord in every sad and bitter experience! 2. The title proceeds, concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite. Who was this Cush? The word means black. It may possibly refer to the colour of the skin and hair, and been given as a familiar designation to some swarthy Benjamite. Some have supposed that it was David's title for Saul. Others have referred it to Shimei, the Benjamite, whose furious abuse of the king, in the hour of his calamity, elicited such plaintive resignation from him, such passionate resentment from Abishai. If the psalm be carefully examined, it will be found to bear a close resemblance to the words spoken by David, when Saul and he held the brief colloquy outside the cave at Engedi, and afterwards at the hill Hachilah. On comparison of psalm and narrative it seems more than likely that Cush was one of Saul's intimate friends and constant companions, and that he was incessantly at work poisoning the king's mind with malignant and deliberate falsehoods about David. I. **SEARCH YOUR HEART TO SEE IF THESE SLANDERS HAVE FOUNDATION IN FACT.** Perhaps those quick, envious eyes have discerned weaknesses in your character, of which your closest friends are aware, but they have shrunk from telling you. II. **IF THERE IS NO BASIS FOR THEM, REJOICE!** How thankful we should be that God has kept us from being actually guilty of the things whereof we are accused! We might have done them, and worse. III. **TAKE SHELTER IN THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD.** We are his servants, and if He is satisfied with us, why should we break our hearts over what our fellow-servants say? It is, after all, but a small matter with us to be judged of man's judgment. IV. **ABJURE MORE COMPLETELY THE CARNAL LIFE.** Why do we smart under these unkind and slanderous words, which are as baseless as uncharitable? Is it not because we set too high a value upon the favour and applause of men? V. **LEAVE GOD TO VINDICATE YOUR GOOD NAME.** (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Ver. 7. Saul lay sleeping within the trench.—*The danger of spiritual lethargy*:—The circumstances of Saul, and the manner in which he was treated by David, may have a warning voice to unbelievers, careless, thoughtless, and slumbering in their sins. The King of Israel was bound to David by every tie of gratitude, as to the man who had saved his life and kingdom. Yet with an unthankfulness the most flagrant did he aim if possible to destroy him. With this unrighteous purpose, he had followed David into the wilderness of Ziph, and every malignant feeling was arrayed against the man after God's own heart. And what is the unbeliever's state in reference to God? Hath not the Most High visited him with providential and spiritual mercies? Look how eternal love is manifested, in that "Christ hath died for him, the just for the unjust, that He might bring him to God." What is the result? Hath this flow of goodness softened and melted him into deep repentance, adoring gratitude, and holy reconciliation? No; look how the offender is pursuing the Lord to dishonour Him—mark how the carnal mind is enmity against God. The lips, to which God hath given language, are opened to blaspheme Him. The feet, to which He hath given motion, walk in the way of scorers. In prosecution of his unrighteous purpose, Saul had pitched in the hill of Hachilah, whither David and Abishai his

sister's son followed him. And when they came, "behold Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and the spear stuck in the ground at his bolster; but Abner, the captain of his host, and the people lay round about him." His army, confident and well appointed, were at his bidding and hard at hand; he looked for no resistance, but expected soon and safely to possess and destroy his enemy, and he fell asleep in the fulness of security. In that warfare which the rebellious sinner wages with his offended Maker, how often doth self-confidence lull his soul to sleep in the trench! His heart is lulled to sleep by the deceitfulness of sin. The very forbearance he hath received serves to deepen his lethargy. Satan leads him blindfold into danger. Jonah slept in the storm; Samson slept in the lap of Delilah, while the Philistines were upon him; Sisera slept in the tent of Jael the Kenite; and thus doth the soul without Christ sleep amidst the terrors of impending wrath. A deep sleep had fallen upon Saul "from the Lord." O tremble, lest, while ye are wrapped up in this insensibility, an offended God should continue and deepen the spirit of slumber upon you in judgment. Saul slept securely, but he was in the power of his enemies. David had good reason to regard him as a foe; and how shall God regard you who depart from him? Abishai said unto David, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand this day." Is your spiritual slumber so deep that ye cannot hear Satan express a similar desire? Doth he not long to put forth his hand for a first and final stroke against your lives? (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. Destroy him not.—*Vengeance left with him to whom it belongs*:—Our attention has been called to the fact that the first great victory achieved by David was over his own spirit. As we pursue his history, we are glad to find that his first triumph of this noblest kind was not his last. His cruel and implacable foe, who had come out with three thousand armed men determined either to take him prisoner or to hunt him to death, was now entirely in his hands. It was a golden opportunity, and David made a golden use of it, for he refused to avenge himself, and suffered his deadly enemy to depart in peace. For three years he had lived the life of a fugitive, and in many ways and places had sought to shelter himself against the unrighteous and pitiless wrath of Saul. There were many things to enkindle his resentment and make forbearance towards Saul a most difficult virtue. Think of what he had lost, and what he had suffered! How strangely things combined together to make the worse appear the better course! The promise and the providence of God both seemed on the side of instant and complete vengeance! But David was versed in the Law of God; and in one of the earlier books of his incomplete, but precious, priceless Bible, he had read these commandments: "Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord." (Lev. 19-18.) David's generous forbearance touched the heart of Saul, disarmed him of his rage, melted him into tears, and constrained him to become a suppliant at the feet of the man for whose blood he had been thirsting. This second display of magnanimity on David's part was a greater triumph of saintly principle than the first. All the former reasons in favour of avenging himself still existed, and in greater force, because of the additional sufferings he had endured; and now there was to be added another reason of almost irresistible power. He had cast his pearl before swine which had turned again to rend him. His kindness had been shamefully abused, and evil had been returned for his good. The King's life, which he had nobly spared, was consecrated afresh to the work of securing his destruction. To spare it a second time was for David to sharpen the sword by which he himself would be slain; and that surely would be charity degenerating into fanaticism. It is evident that David's faith in God was one of the great roots out of which all these fruits of forbearance and patience and compassion grew. He was confident that God would in His own way and in His own time fulfil the promises which had been made; and, therefore, instead of taking the matter into his own hands, he could rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. They say that "Revenge is sweet." There can be no doubt of the truth of this, for perverted natures have perverted tastes, and loathe what they ought to love, and banquet with delight on what they ought to abhor. David had feelings in his heart which would have been intensely gratified if he had taken vengeance on his enemy; but would not his revenge have been like the book the seer did eat in the Apocalypse, sweet in the mouth, but bitterness in the belly? Patience and meekness and forgiveness are often very hard to exercise, but when they become

matters of memory, are they not things of beauty, and a joy for ever? The poet tells of one who sat by the grave of the friend from whom he had parted in anger, and wept at the remembrance of his former harshness:—"Cruel, cruel the words I said! Cruelly come they back to-day." Probably there are men now sleeping in the dust who in their lifetime wronged and injured you. If you forgave them, and prayed for them, and sought to bless them, does the memory of that Christ-likeness on your part ever give you a moment's sorrow? Yes, revenge may be sweet, but, like all the pleasures of sin, it is but for a season. Mercy is God's delight. He who receives it through Jesus secures his passport to the skies. He who learns to imitate it, lays up treasure for himself in heaven. Happy he who by the grace of God so carries himself toward them that curse him and despitefully use him, that he does not invoke his own condemnation, when, in his daily prayer, he cries, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." (C. Vince.) **Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord and be guiltless?**—*David's magnanimity* :—I. **THE PERSONS HERE CONCERNED ARE SAUL AND DAVID, AND THE STATE IN WHICH THE TEXT SHEWS US THESE TWO WAS THAT OF ENMITY.** Consider, therefore, that the prince that was his captive now, and at his mercy had somewhere since descended so below himself, as to become the envier and detractor from his praise, was poorly jealous of the honours he had purchased, and tried to blast the laurels he had gathered, at the expense of so much painful toil and hazard; and 'tis no little share of grace and goodness that can restrain a young aspiring hero from taking vengeance on the maligners of his praise, and from removing all impediments in his pursuit of fame and glory. When men's lives are so apparently sought after, they usually lay all respects aside, and listen to the dictates of unruly Nature. He was a false, perfidious prince. Nothing affects a generous mind so sensibly as being cheated under shew of friendship; and treachery is never viler than when 'tis covered with the mask of godliness. But further, he was perjured. He had but lately taken a solemn oath before the Lord and Jonathan, David should not be slain. And when a prince has thus abandoned common honesty, broken the sacred cords that knit societies, and keep up governments and mutual correspondences, he is justly delivered into the hands of those whose innocence and good credulity he had imposed on, and abused almost to their destruction. Oh, what a mighty measure of God's grace must fill the heart of him that then could say, "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." There are some things besides our lives and persons, in which, if we are touched, we think ourselves extremely injured; and they are specially our friends, our fortunes and religion; and David was in every one of these affected more or less by Saul's implacable pursuit, and hunting after him. But notwithstanding all this, great as he was in court, great as he was in camp, and greater yet in favour of the people, he would not venture on the impious fact, still it was, "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." 'Tis surely with ambition, as with other passions, the imaginary joys are greater than the experienced and substantial ones: The hopes and expectations far exceed the pleasures of possession. Whatever cares belong to crowns, they lie concealed within their circles, and are more seldom seen than felt. But this temptation found no place with David, young, and gay, and vigorous as he was, and even so near the crown, that by conniving at Abishai's blow, he might have been in full and sure possession of it; yet he suffered not himself to be transported beyond the bounds of rigid honesty and loyalty, and still cries out, "The Lord forbid." Now, to conclude, and to complete this character, add, lastly, to these great advantages of being son-in-law, a mighty man of valour, and accepted in the sight of all the people, of knowing Saul rejected, and himself designed for successor, the greatest yet of all advantages, and that is opportunity; that without which all others signify but little; and that with which alone men serve their turns, and make up the defects of all the rest; that pander to all sin, and fatal snare of virtue! That that has ruined many thousand souls, and betrayed them into most detestable commissions. Opportunity, that few have virtue, few have strength sufficient to withstand, and of all opportunities, none are so strong, and work so powerfully upon the minds of men as those that look providential ones, and seem to come from God. Yet this was David's opportunity, and yet withstood. II. **CONSIDER THE REASON DAVID GAVE FOR HIS REFUSAL OF ABISHAI'S AND THE SOLDIERS' PROFFER,** "It is the Lord's anointed." The laws of God did certainly secure the lives of kings as well as other men's, if it did no more. The Lord shall smite him, or his

day shall come, or he shall perish in the battle, that is, I leave him to God's disposal; let God, the Judge of all the earth, do with him as he pleases. And though we think the leaving wicked kings to God is the lightest and the kindest expression of nothing in the world that can be; yet we would quickly alter our opinions and be of David's mind, if we would give ourselves leave to consider: 1. That he hates injustice more. 2. That he is much more ready. 3. Much more able to punish it than we can be. (*W. Fleetwood.*)

Vers. 21—25. Then said Saul, I have sinned.—*Saul's second reconciliation*:—When a man like Saul has wept, and spoken words so morally noble, it is but fair to credit him with sincerity and permanence. At the time of his reconciliation he meant every word he said. Yet in a brief period we find Saul going down to the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men to seek David, who had been reported as hiding himself in the hill of Hachilah. Then came the gush of emotion upon the part of Saul. The weapon which conquered him in the first instance conquered him also in the second. Forbearance was mightier than weapons of war. The sword has slain its countless thousands, but love holds the universe in sweet and glad captivity. I. It is proved that the DEEPEST AND SINCEREST EMOTION MAY BE TRANSIENT IN ITS MORAL EFFECTS. We left Saul reconciled; we find him again in arms. There are two things which are often mistaken for Christian feeling. 1. Selfish gratitude for unexpected preservation. 2. Admiration of moral nobleness in others. See how this is applicable to hearers of the Gospel. Men hear of Jesus Christ's sympathy, love, beneficence, etc. Feeling may be exhausted. "Past feeling." II. It is shown that SELF-CONTROL IS IN PROPORTION TO THE ESTIMATE FORMED OF THE DIVINE ELEMENT THAT IS IN MAN. How was it that David withheld his hand when Saul was delivered over to him as lawful prey? Human nature said, Strike; another voice said, Forbear! Twice David might have slain Saul, and twice he spared his life. We want to know the secret of this marvellous self-control. We find it pithily stated in the interview between Abishai and David. Abishai said, "Thine enemy": David said, "The Lord's anointed." Two different views of the same man! The one narrow, selfish, superficial; the other profound and true. So it is with every man: he is not to be measured merely by his personal relations to ourselves. Pray to see the highest and divinest aspect of every man's character. We shall thus be enabled: 1. To hope something even of the worst; and (2) to do something in the negative work of sparing, even where we cannot do anything in the positive work of reclaiming. Paul had respect even for a weak man, not because he was weak, but because Christ died for him. By taking the highest view of man, he was enabled to do many things for the sake of the Christ that was in him. "But when ye so sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." III. It is shown how much better it is to TRUST OUR INTERESTS TO THE WORKING OUT OF DIVINE LAWS THAN TO CARE FOR THEM WITH NARROWNESS OF SPIRIT. "As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him," etc. Why fight with thy own poor weak fist? etc. Why prefer murder to Divine retribution? Why narrow down human life to a paltry duel? etc. The battle is not yours, but God's. Shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? IV. It is clearly shown that FLIGHT FROM DANGER IS PERFECTLY COMPATIBLE WITH THE HIGHEST COURAGE. David was never chargeable with cowardice, yet he escaped like an affrighted man. "If they persecute you in one city," etc. There is a time to fight (Goliath); there is a time to fly (Saul). The one was an uncircumcised Philistine, the other was the Lord's anointed. Understand that there are differences of conquest. David conquered Saul as surely as he conquered Goliath. God sees His own image in us. To recover it, He sent His Son. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. I have played the fool.—*Playing the fool*:—The greatest and most difficult problem which the Church of God has had to face in all ages, and has had to try and solve is this—how to prevent men and women playing the fool. Thank God all down history there have been those who were bold enough to put out a protest, who, in spite of tremendous difficulties, were bold enough to call upon the fools not to deal so foolishly, and to the wicked not to set up their horn. And, believe me, the protest is still required. In spite of all our advance, in spite of our free education, there is still a vast number of those who walk in the ways of folly. Education is not enough to prevent a man playing the fool. You find

men gambling away fortunes honest men have made, and you find men who try to drown their sorrows in what is called the sparkling cup—forgetting all the time that they are drowning their souls in perdition. You have no right to charge at God's door the things that you ought to charge at the door of your own folly. It is always being done—the Lord this, and the Lord that; it is you. 1. The folly of banishing God from life. Well, now; I find in God's Word that there are three very special forms of folly which He there points out. I don't know whether you have observed that Psalm xiv. and Psalm lxxiii. are word for word the same; and in both there is this statement: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Literally in the Hebrew that is not just the idea of the writer. It is, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God"—that is, "No God for me." The folly here spoken of is a much more common folly—I mean the folly of the man that says, "I do not want God in my life, I do not want God in my home, I do not want God to rule and control in my heart." 2. The envious fool. Furthermore, you find another description of a foolish person in Psalm lxxiii.—the foolishness that is envious at the prosperity of the wicked. It is an old problem. 3. The money-grubbing fool. Another definition of a fool that I must not omit to-night comes in connection with our Blessed Lord's ministry, and that is Luke xii.—"Thou fool!" What does it mean? Oh, it means that to put much emphasis on temporal things, and to neglect eternal things, and to set much value on things that pass away, and neglect the things that do not pass away, is the act of a fool. 4. The self-important fool. We dwell upon the special foolishness which attached to Saul, King of Israel. His foolishness lay in this, that he had an overweening estimate of his own importance. Saul was head and shoulders above his people, a pity for him, because it turned his head. Oh, it is a dreadful thing to be over-conscious of your own importance. God can do nothing with a man like that till He has brought him down, down, down, down. "He bringeth down the mighty from their seats, He exalteth the humble and meek." Then there was another great mistake Saul made, he fought against David. He knew that David was indeed the Lord's anointed; he knew that David ought to have the throne; he knew that David had been infinitely kind to him. But Saul determined, in the pride of his heart, to have David's life; there was a confederacy against him, the Lord's chosen. 5. God's remedy for folly. It would be sorry work to talk about the follies of men and women if one could not tell of a remedy. The fool requires two things. He requires a revelation of wisdom, to meet his folly; and he requires a revelation of power, to overcome his weakness. Is there such a revelation? Yes, here, and nowhere else than in that book. (*Marcus Rainsford.*) *Playing the fool*:—Now, if Saul's folly mainly consisted in yielding to the impulses of passion, and obeying the dictates not of duty but of a selfish heart, with no regard to the consequences, certainly he has no lack of successors. A few choice specimens have come under my personal notice. My album has some rare portraits: and the first I shall name is I. THE IDLER. If the world contains a genuine fool, it is the young man who wastes his time. Some things God gives often, others only once. Youth belongs to the latter category, and if it be thrown away is beyond recovery. Idleness is always demoralising. Almost all the moral havoc that is wrought amongst young men is effected after the office door is closed. Few men go wrong when they are busy at work. Tell me how a youth spends his evenings and his half-holidays, and I shall have a good idea of his character. The worst thing you can do of an evening is to do nothing. You may easily predict a man's future when you know how he spends his hours of leisure. The next portrait I have to present is II. THE BUFFOON. There are many who seem incapable of a serious thought. They jest at everything. They live in an atmosphere of hilarity. They treat life as if it were a great joke. There is scarcely a trace of gravity or good sense in them. They are to society only what bells are to horses, making plenty of jingle, but not assisting to draw. It is a poor ambition this; the habitual jester is an empty fribble. Such men have no reverence in their nature. They have not a conception of the dignity of manhood. They have scarcely respect even for religion, and some profane quotation from Holy Writ is enough to set them in a roar. Let all such characters awaken within you a feeling of revulsion. Do not associate with them. Admissible they might be in a menagerie, but life is too serious to tolerate them. The next page of my album introduces to us: III. THE WORLDLING. The next on my list is: IV. THE SENSUALIST. I mean the man who is a slave to his baser passions and wallows in the mire of bestiality. The pure shrink from his touch;

his breath blights every innocent thing. V. THE PERSISTENT UNBELIEVER. (*J. Thain Davidson, D.D.*) *Playing the fool*:—I. SAUL'S HISTORY JUSTIFIES THIS EXPRESSION, INASMUCH AS HIS PUBLIC LIFE WAS MARKED BY A CONTINUED ATTEMPT AT THOROUGH INDEPENDENCE OF GOD. Here is discoverable the great secret of Saul's downfall. This was his folly, here he erred. He made the attempt to get on without God. 1. This was folly—first, because it was subversive of all that reason and wisdom suggested. For the very being of a God is of itself a fact sufficiently indicative of the place which the creatures of that God should occupy. It was attempting to alter the relative positions of the Universal Sovereign and of His subjects—the relative position of the Great Proprietor of all and of those who are entirely at His disposal. The laws of nature, in regard to matter, allow no interference with them which would subvert the relative conditions of strength and weakness, independence and dependence, without such results as expose the folly of the attempt. Let the lighter materials, of which the superstructure may be safely built, be employed for the foundation, and let the heavy blocks—the solid masses—of which the foundation should consist, be used for the superstructure, and the builder will soon have to say, "I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." Attempt to frame a raft of some substance whose specific gravity is greater than that of water, and the moment you launch it on the waves it will sink, and imminent peril will ensue, and you will just have been "playing the fool." Or come to nature's laws as regards moral beings—indulge a course of action which subverts these. Let the rule be that the child's will shall take precedence of the parent's, the servant's of the master's, that superior and inferior should change places, and would not the results in families and households soon prove that all this was but "erring exceedingly?" And shall there be any success where man, dependent man, thus takes or attempts to take the place of independence? Can he rid himself of God, when, at the utmost stretch of self-will, he is asking, "Who is Lord over me?" 2. Besides, if it be against all reason to put our own will into the place of God's, it is not less against our interest to do so. Saul, indeed, attempted to do as well without God as with Him; but did he succeed? Did he get on as well without God as with Him? And did ever the history of a single individual justify the supposition that this was possible? It is only "the blessing of the Lord" which "maketh rich, and He added no sorrow with it." II. APPLICABLE AS THE SENTENCE WAS TO THE WHOLE RETROSPECT OF HIS HISTORY, IT WAS PRE-EMINENTLY APPROPRIATE TO THIS PORTION OF IT. In many respects he had thus erred; in one respect most especially and distressingly so. He was now addressing David, a man whom on every ground, he ought to have loved, for he was lovely in himself, and he had done Saul good service; and, moreover, he stood in very near relationship to him—the husband of his daughter, the bosom-friend of his son. It is not difficult to gather the reasons of this verdict pronounced upon himself; and they demand our attention, because they expose to our view points of possible error in our own conduct. His folly and error consisted in treating a man as his enemy who was, in reality, his best friend. Have you ever, like Saul in reference to David, felt the risings of dislike to your friend, because, in some form or another, he seemed to stand in the way of your cherished plans and self-gratifying projects? Beware how you listen to the suggestions of the evil spirit. Saul's folly consisted, not simply in treating as an enemy the man who was really his best friend, but in attempting, by this very conduct towards David, to fly in the face of those Divine arrangements to which, however humiliating their character, he was bound, in meekness, to have submitted. God had assigned the kingdom to David: Saul was determined to keep it for himself and his family. It was the one purpose of Saul's life to defeat God's arrangement; and nothing promised so readily and directly to accomplish his object as the death of David, and this became, therefore, the one great point at which he aimed. Yet never does a man commit himself to a harder, and at the same time more fruitless, enterprise than when he fights against God's providential arrangements—when, for instance, God is evidently calling on him to give up some plan of his own—when God is requiring him to take a humbler level, and he will grasp tightly and hold tenaciously the position which everything combines to tell him is not for himself nor his family, but for another. "Their folly shall be made manifest to all men;" and not less shall it be felt by themselves. Submission, which they would not render voluntarily to One who has a just right to claim it, will be wrung out of them reluctantly by One against whom "none ever hardened himself and prospered." Saul,

alas! admitted his error, but took no steps to turn his confession to practical advantage. Let us be careful against such a neglect. Let us proceed at once, by God's blessing, to act out our convictions. (*J. A. Miller.*) *The folly of man*:—This is not the kind of thing a man would say if he gave himself time to think. It is not a statement made after preparation. Men do not speak in this wise after thought and preparation, and that fact makes the utterance the more valuable, for it is under such stress of circumstances that men often reveal the ever-present, but habitually hidden, consciousness. It was so with Saul on this occasion. 1. This man was a man of good family and position in life. His father was Kish, "a mighty man of valour," and the marginal reading most strikingly catches the thought of the original word—"a mighty man of substance; a wealthy man." 2. Notice, also, that he was a man of splendid physique—a choice man is the word, a goodly man, a man standing head and shoulders above his fellows, handsome and strong. Let no man ever put any false value upon incompetency in the physical realm. Saul started with the magnificent capital of a strong physique. 3. Again, he was a man of simple life, living at home, interested in his father's affairs, by no means a prodigal. 4. He was, moreover, a man of modest disposition. 5. And then, once again, he was a man of courage, not the courage that vaunts itself, which is of the very essence of cowardice, not the courage that talks, but the courage that farms until his nation is insulted, and then strikes. Now, this is the man that says in the words of my text, "I have played the fool!" Notice Saul's opportunities. 1. He is the chosen of God; the choice is Divinely, definitely stated. He had opened before him a door, passing through which he should find the life—simple, and modest, and strong, and beautiful, that had been preparing in the past—put into a place of activity and of service, of which he had never dreamed. What scope for his powers in the kingly office! What chances to bless his fellow men! This was his opportunity. 2. Then notice another fact proving how great that opportunity was. He had the friendship of Samuel, a man of God, a seer, the leader of the people. 3. Then remember this also, in speaking of his opportunity. It is said of him that "there went with him a band of men whose hearts God had touched." This man with such glorious opportunities is the one who, coming near the end of life, surprised in a crisis, cries out, "I have played the fool!" This is not the story of a man who made final shipwreck in the early years of his life, or the story of a man who had no chance in life, who inherited forces that damned him, but the story of a man who seems to have had everything in his favour at the beginning—his own person and character were magnificent, his surroundings highly favoured and privileged, and yet this man came at last to say that he had played the fool. 1. I find the first point of that failure on the day when Samuel had come with the hosts of the people for the crowning of the man whom God had chosen to be king. Where was he? Hiding away. A man has no business to be modest when God has anointed him for work. There is a modesty that is blasphemous. It is of the very essence of a self-centred life, and if God has anointed a man to be king, that man sins when he allows modesty to hold him back from the kingly office. What was it? Failure to follow God at all costs and against all inclinations. Here is the beginning of all the trouble that wrecked this man's character and life, that spoiled his opportunities, that drew from him that which was at once an awful confession and a wail of anguish. "Behold! I have played the fool!" 2. From that day pass over the years, and come to the day of impatient waiting at Gilgal. Samuel did not come, as he was expected, and Saul arrogated to himself the right to offer a sacrifice, an act that was not lawful to him. Underlying that act is the spirit of rebellion, the rebellion of a self-centred life. 3. Follow him still further, and notice the degeneration of character. The man who began by hiding away, and then became self-dependent, and then fell into disobedience and lying, now becomes rash, and takes an oath upon him which jeopardises the life of the fairest man in his kingdom, his own son Jonathan. 4. Mark the process still further, and see him at last. In the early years he was himself among the prophets, speaking by the inspiration of the wind of God that passed across his soul. See him now creeping in the darkness of the night to the witch of Endor, asking for some occult subtle revelation of secrets because the light of day is blotted from his life. And then—What then? Suicide! You may call it anything you like, but if I ask a man to slay me, and because he refuses I fall upon my sword, what is it, if not suicide? What are the causes? First, as we have said, lack of loyalty to God. Life makes shipwreck of itself

except when the hand of God is upon the helm; no matter how fair and glorious and beautiful the promise of morning, night will bring disaster and defeat, unless there is the loyal handing over of the will of man to the will of God. But mark how this works out in life; see how the man, when once his life is taken out of the Divine government and control, neglects his best friends, Samuel, David, Jonathan; mark how he fails to understand the opportunity of his kingship. A man who seems only to have seen in kingship an opportunity for fighting and victory and possession, forgets the greater fact, that the king is to be shepherd also, to provide for his people, protecting them from harm, feeding and leading them like a flock. Let us in a few closing words gather up what seem to be the lessons of that life. 1. First, advantages do not ensure success. The fact of your family, the fact of your disposition, the fact of your physical power, the fact of your courage, all these things are to be valued, but none of them will ensure success. I pray you, do not undervalue the fact that your father believed in God and your mother prayed. The young man that undervalues such facts is already playing the fool, and unless he learns ere it be too late the infinite value of that possession, he will do so to the end of time. Your parents gave you no capital to start in life with, do I hear you tell your friend? It is not true; your father gave you an example of cleanness and honour, your mother of devotion and prayer, and the man who wants any other capital than that should go to the workhouse and stay there! Where would some of us be if God had not barred the way for us by a mother's prayer and a father's godly life? A man may have all these, and play the fool at the end. Your disposition may be in your favour—you are the very man that will make shipwreck if you do not mind. It is not the cold, cynical man that is in danger of making shipwreck so much as the man of laughter and life, the man who is the centre of every social circle. That is the man the devil is after, because he is the man that God loves. 2. Again let me remind you that opportunities do not crown men. God may have called you to a great opportunity in life, and you may even enter upon the opportunity and yet miss it. How, then, says one man, can I live so as not to play the fool? Hear this. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Surrender to God, loyalty, obedience; these are the things that ensure a man against folly and against failure. You can never achieve the possibilities that slumber in your personality until you have exercised the kingship of your being, by putting the crown of your manhood upon the brow of the Man of Nazareth. Find your way in humility and loneliness to the Cross, and looking into the face of the world's God and King say, "Oh, Nazarene! Thou hast conquered;" then you will begin to live. No man can make shipwreck if Christ be King. No man can be lost in the swelling flood if the Pilot with the pierced hand is at the helm. Yield to Him, man, to-night. Yield to Him who alone is able to realise the possibilities of your being, and bring them at last to God's consummation. (*G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1. And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.—*Despondency: Its causes and cure:*—I. **THE GLOOM AND DESPONDENCY OF DAVID'S HEART.** How variable is the Christian's experience! Few pass on long without changes; the more equable Christians are generally those of the slightest attainments. The little tree is but moved by the breeze, the ponderous oak with its outstretching branches feels its full weight; the tiny lake that only presents a small surface is but rippled, the sea is heaved and lashed into a fury. The powerful passion is generally allied to the corresponding intellect, and acts as a counterbalancing power. David was a large-souled and large-hearted man, his experience is ever-varying, the slightest circumstance stirs him to the depths. II. **THE CAUSES OF THIS DESPONDENCY.** God never willeth that we should be cast down; it is attributable to ourselves. Some men exclude themselves from the rays of the sun; it shines nevertheless. 1. The first cause here is his regarding man as a primary instead of a secondary agent. "I shall one day perish by

the hand of Saul." Why? Is there anything in Saul that came not from God? Is he a man? God made him. A king? God appointed him. Has he power? It also belongs to God, and when His arm is removed, Saul at once becomes the helpless child. Another cause is found:—2. In communing with his heart instead of with God. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man," is as much true of ourselves as others. The earth kept by the centripetal and centrifugal forces never wanders too far from, or goes too near, the sun; let them cease but for one moment and we should with lightning speed rush into collision, or be lost in endless space. So man's heart under Heavenly guidance is, and must be right. Die by the enemy, go into the land of the Philistines. The enemy within suggested it. III. DAVID ERRED IN COMPARING HIS OWN WITH HIS ENEMY'S FORCES. Compare the suggestions of sense and faith. Sense says, what can six hundred with a valiant captain do against the army of Saul? Sense sees the host of Satan's emissaries encamped before the solitary soul and says, Fly, for thy life fly, ere they overtake. Faith goes beyond, stoops not to count the opposing forces, and gives assurance of the victory. Sense says, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." Faith says, Greater is he that is for me than all that can be against me. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." IV. ANOTHER CAUSE OF HIS DESPONDENCY WAS HIS FORGETFULNESS OF THE DIVINE PROMISES. Had not Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, visited his father's house and anointed him king? Had not this choice again and again been ratified? Had not Saul, his enemy, been forced to acknowledge him as his successor? Yet Saul is to kill him. V. SEE THE CONSEQUENCE OF ACTING ON SUCH CONVICTIONS. It may be that some of us have found our way into the land of the Philistines, have gone for peace and found war, gone for safety and have been more exposed. Why? Because we have acted against the Spirit and the Word. Take David's experience as confirmatory of such results. Listen no more to such misleading assertions. Die! yes, you will, as far as a separation of the body from the spirit is concerned; but by the hand of the enemy, never, no, never. (J. H. Snell.) *Sins arising from discouragement*:—1. This incident in David's life is most instructive. It shows us the folly of endeavouring to remove evils under which we labour, by unlawful means; and especially of resorting to such expedients in our moments of discouragement; and may further teach us, that under all circumstances, the path of duty is the path of safety. 2. This lesson is one which we greatly need. Under the pressure of trials we naturally seek relief; and if no lawful means present themselves, we are tempted to use those which are unlawful; and by a delusive reasoning satisfy ourselves that that is right, which under other circumstances we should ourselves condemn as wrong. We often have cause to repent of resolutions taken, like David's, under the pressure of trials and the influence of discouraged feeling. The fact is that despondency borders on insanity. "It makes a man his own executioner, and leads to suicidal acts." Everything, therefore, we do under the influence of such feeling will be pretty sure to be wrong, and to give us work for after repentance. 3. Again, our subject may be applied to another class of hearers. There are those who have made many efforts to gain the hope of the Christian, but have failed in all. They say, "that they have sought most earnestly to believe and feel as the people of God do: that they have prayed, inquired, and done all that they knew ought to be done, but still do not enjoy a 'hope of acceptance,' and now they are discouraged, and that discouragement leads them into a very sinful resolution. This is a very common case, and one with which ministers and Christians do not sympathize as they ought. We are disposed, when we see one lingering in neglect of religion, to condemn him as if nothing but obstinacy and rebellion prevented his surrender of himself to God. We bear down harshly upon him with the terrors of the law, when the man needs encouragement. Such severity only tends to exasperate and harden. The Jews in Jeremiah's time said 'There is no hope,' and added, 'we will walk after our own devices.'" "The beggar will sometimes knock at a door until he finds that no notice is likely to be taken of his application, and then rail at those who live within; and so let the sinner fear that God's heart is hardened against him, and his own heart will soon be hardened against God." Let Christians, then, beware of taking away hope from the inquiring soul, by condemning all delay as obstinacy and obduracy, for it may arise from discouraged feeling; and the sinner may lie in the mire of sin, because he has made many efforts to get out, only to fall back again into the ditch. 4. And let the inquirer beware of yielding to discouragement, and thence to sin. He may say, "I have

sought, and prayed so many times, and found no relief; must I still continue to seek?" Even so, for what better can you do? If you finally and entirely cease from all effort, you are certainly lost; if you persevere you may be saved, and certainly will be in the end. Rise, discouraged soul, renew thy prayers, and if a lifetime of blind perplexed inquiries end in thine everlasting salvation, count the blessing cheaply won. 5. The same advice may apply to the backslidden Christian or to those who sometimes hope they are accepted in Christ, but lack the clear evidence of it. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *David's fear and folly*:—I. OBSERVE HIS FEAR. It was the language, not of his lips, but of his feelings—he "said in his heart, I shall now one day perish by the hand of Saul." If a man hawks about his trouble from door to door, we may be assured he will never die of grief. Profound sorrow, like the deep river, flows noiseless; the man wounded at heart, like the smitten deer, leaves the herd for the shade. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." And suppose he had? This was all the injury he could have done him: and we are forbidden to fear those that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. He must have died, according to the course of nature, in a few years: and what is death, in any form, to a good man, but falling asleep or going home? He ought then, you say, to have risen above the fear of death. But David was in no danger of perishing by the hand of Saul. Saul was indeed a malicious and powerful enemy; but he was chained, and could do nothing against him except it was given him from above. And the Lord was on David's side. And he had the promise of the throne, which implied his preservation. And he had already experienced many wonderful deliverances. You would do well to take the advice of an old writer. "Never," says he, "converse with your difficulties alone." II. REMINDED OF DAVID'S FOLLY. "There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." But nothing could have been worse. For by this step—he would alienate the affections of the Israelites from him—he would justify the reproaches of the enemy—he would deprive himself of the means of grace and the ordinances of religion—he would grieve his soul with the vice and idolatry of the heathen—he would put himself out of the warrant of Divine protection—and lay himself under peculiar obligation to those whom he could not serve without betraying the cause of God. 1. How much depends on one improper step. The effects may be remediless, and give a complexion to all our future days. Our reputation, our comfort, our usefulness, our religion, our very salvation, may hinge upon it. 2. Let us learn how incompetent we are to judge for ourselves. (*W. Jay.*) *A fit of mistrust*:—The Psalms, which, with more or less probability, may be assigned to this period of David's life, are marked with growing sadness and depression. Amongst them may be reckoned the x, xii., xvii., xxü. xxv., lxiv., and perhaps xi. and lxix. I. LET US EXAMINE THIS SUDDEN RESOLUTION. 1. It was the suggestion of worldly policy. "David said in his heart." Never act in a panic; nor allow man to dictate to thee; calm thyself and be still; force thyself into the quiet of thy closet until the pulse beats normally and the scare has ceased to perturb. When thou art most eager to act is the time when thou wilt make the most pitiable mistakes. 2. It was very dishonouring to God. Surely, then, it was unworthy of David to say, in effect: "I am beginning to fear that God has undertaken more than He can carry through. True, He has kept me hitherto; but I question if He can make me surmount the growing difficulties of my situation. Saul will, sooner or later, accomplish his designs against me; it is a mistake to attempt the impossible. I have waited till I am tired; it is time to use my own wits, and extricate myself while I can from the nets that are being drawn over my path." How much easier it is to indicate a true course to others in hours of comparative security, than to stand to it under a squall of wind! 3. It was highly injurious. Philistia was full of idol temples and idolatrous priests (2 Sam. v. 21). What fellowship could David look for with the Divine Spirit who had chosen Israel for his people and Jacob for the lot of his inheritance? How could he sing the Lord's songs in a strange land? 4. It was the entrance on a course that demanded the perpetual practice of deceit. The whole behaviour of David at this time was utterly unworthy of his high character as God's anointed servant. 5. It was also a barren time in his religious experience. No psalms are credited to this period. The sweet singer was mute. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The danger of doubting*:—I. THE THOUGHT OF DAVID'S HEART WAS FALSE. He said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." 1. We might conclude it to be false upon the very face of it, because there certainly was no evidence to prove it. On no one occasion

had the Lord deserted his servant. Now, mark. When you and I doubt God's Word there is this to be said of it, we mistrust it without a cause. 2. But, again, what David said in his heart was not only without evidence, but it was contrary to evidence. What reason had he to believe that God would leave him? Rather, how many evidences had he to conclude that the Lord neither could nor would leave him? 3. This exclamation of David was contrary to God's promises. Samuel had poured the anointing oil on David's head—God's earnest and promise that David should be king. Let David die by the hand of Saul, how can the promise be fulfilled? 4. But further, this wicked exclamation of David was contrary to what he himself had often said. Yet once more, this exclamation of David was contrary to the facts. I mean not merely contrary to the facts that were in evidence, but contrary to the facts that were transpiring at that very moment. Where was Saul? II. How was it THAT DAVID CAME TO THINK THUS OF HIS GOD? 1. The first answer I give is, because he was a man. The best of men are men at the best; and man at the best, is such a creature that well might David himself say, "Lord, what is man?" 2. But again, you must consider that David had been exposed to a very long trial; not for one week, but for month after month, he had been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. Now, a man could bear one trial, but a perpetuity of tribulation is very hard to bear. 3. Then again, you must remember, David had passed through some strong excitements of mind. III. WHAT WERE THE ILL-EFFECTS OF DAVID'S UNBELIEF? 1. It made him do a foolish thing, the same foolish thing which he had rued once before. He goes to the same Achish again! Yes, and mark ye, although you and I know the bitterness of sin, yet if we are left to our own unbelief, we shall fall into the same sin again. 2. But next: for the beginning of sin is like the letting out of water, and we go from bad to worse, he went over to the Lord's enemies. He that killed Goliath sought a refuge in Goliath's land; he who smote the Philistines trusts in the Philistines; nay, more, he who was Israel's champion, becomes the chamberlain to Achish. 3. That not only thus did David become numbered with God's enemies, but that he actually went into open sin. David did two very evil things. He acted the part of a liar and deceiver. He went out and slew the Geshurites, and sundry other tribes, and this he did often. When he came back, Achish asked him where he had been, and he said he had been to the south of Judah—that is to say, he made Achish believe that his incursions were made against his own people, instead of being made against the allies of Philistia. This he kept up for a long time; and then, as one sin never goes without a companion, for the devil's hounds always hunt in couples, he was guilty of bloodshed, for into whatsoever town he went, he put all the inhabitants to death; he spared neither man, nor woman, nor child, lest they should tell the king of Philistia where he had been. So that one sin led him on to another. And this is a very sorrowful part of David's life. He that believes God, and acts in faith, acts with dignity, and other men will stoop before him and pay him reverence; but he who disbelieves his God, and begins to act in his own carnal wisdom, will soon be this, and that, and the other, and the enemy will say, "Aha, aha, so would we have it," while the godly will say, "How are the mighty fallen! how hath the strong man been given up unto his adversary!" 4. Furthermore, not only was David guilty of all this, but he was on the verge of being guilty of still worse sin—of covert acts of warfare against the Lord's people; for David having become the friend of Achish, when Achish went to the battle against Israel, David professed his willingness to go. We believe it was only a feigned willingness; but then, you see, we convict him again of falsehood. 5. The last effect of David's sin—and here it blessedly came to close—was this: it brought him into great trial. While David was away with king Achish, the Amalekites invaded the south, and attacked Ziklag, which was David's town. For some reason or other they did not put to death any of the inhabitants, but they took away the whole of the men, the few who were left, the women and children, all their household goods, and stuff, and treasures; and when David came back to Ziklag, there were the bare walls and empty houses, and Ahinoam and Abigail, his two wives, were gone, and all the mighty men who were with him had lost their wives and little ones; and as soon as they saw it, they lifted up their voice and wept. It was not that they had lost their gold and silver, but they had lost everything. That exiled band had lost their own flesh and blood, the partners of their lives. Then they mutinied against their captain, and they said, "Let us stone David." And here is David, a penniless beggar, a leader deserted by his own men, suspected by them

probably of having traitorously given up the town to the foe. And then it is written—and O how blessed is that line!—"And David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Ah! now David is right; now he has come back to his proper anchorage. Sin and smart go together; the child of God cannot sin with impunity. Other men may. Ye that fear not God may go and sin as ye like, and often meet with very little trouble in this world as the consequence of it; but a child of God cannot do that. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 6. Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day.—God's restoring mercy:—Throughout that season of declension and relapse (I. Sam. xxvii., Psalm x.) the loving mercy of God hovered tenderly over David's life. God's restoring mercy was evident. I. IN INCLINING STRONG AND NOBLE MEN TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH DAVID'S CAUSE. "Now these are they," says the chronicler, "that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close, because of Saul, the son of Kish; and they were among the mighty men, helpers in war" (1 Chron. xii. 1). And he proceeds to enumerate them. Some came from Saul's own tribe, experienced marksmen. Some came from the eastern bank of the Jordan, swimming it at the flood, mighty men of valour, men trained for war. "Thine are we, David," etc. Evidently the spirit of discontent was abroad in the land. The people, weary of Saul's oppression and misgovernment, were beginning to realize that the true hope of Israel lay in the son of Jesse. They therefore went out to him without the camp, bearing his reproach. Thus, in silence and secrecy, loyal and true hearts are gathering around our blessed Lord, the centre of whose kingdom is not earthly but heavenly. Who then are willing to leave the tottering realm of the prince of this world, soon to be shattered on the last great battlefield of time, and identify themselves with the kingdom of the Son of David, which is destined to endure as long as the sun? II. IN EXTRICATING HIS SERVANT FROM THE FALSE POSITION INTO WHICH HE HAD DRIFTED. The Philistines suddenly resolved on a forward policy. They were aware of the disintegration which was slowly dividing Saul's kingdom. When this campaign was being meditated, the guileless king assured David that he should accompany him. This was perhaps said as a mark of special confidence. It was, however, a very critical juncture with David. He had no alternative but to follow his liege lord into the battle; but every mile of those fifty or sixty which had to be traversed must have been trodden with lowering face and troubled heart. There was no hope for him in man. If by your mistakes and sins you have reduced yourself to a false position like this, do not despair; hope still in God. Confess and put away your sin, and humble yourself before Him, and He will arise to deliver you. You may have destroyed yourself; but in Him will be your help. An unexpected door of hope was suddenly opened in this valley of Anchor. When Achish reviewed his troops in Aphek, after the lords of the Philistines had passed on by hundreds and by thousands, David and his men passed on in the rearward with the king. This aroused the jealousy and suspicion of the imperious Philistine princes, and they came to Achish with fierce words and threats. "What do these Hebrews here?" etc. They pointed out how virulent a foe he had been, and how tempting the opportunity for him to purchase reconciliation with Saul by turning traitor in the fight. In the end, therefore, the king had to yield. It cost him much to inform David of the inevitable decision to which he was driven; but he little realized with what a burst of relief his announcement was received. He made a show of injured innocence: "What have I done, and what has thou found in thy servant so long as I have been before thee unto this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" But his heart was not with his words; and it was with unfeigned satisfaction that he received the stringent command to depart from the camp with the morning light. III. BY THE DIVINE DEALINGS WITH HIM IN RESPECT TO THE BURNING OF ZIKLAG. It was by God's great mercy that the Philistine lords were so set against the continuance of David in their camp. They thought that they were executing a piece of ordinary policy, dictated by prudence and foresight; little realizing that they were the shears by which God was cutting the meshes of David's net. As David was leaving the battlefield, a number of the men of Manasseh, who appear to have deserted to Achish, were assigned to him by the Philistines, lest they also should turn traitors on the field. Thus he left the camp with a greatly increased following. Here, too, was a proof of God's tender thoughtfulness, because at no time of his life was he in greater need of reinforcements than now. God anticipates coming trial, and reinforces us against its

certain imminence and pressure. On reaching the spot which they accounted home, after three days' exhausting march, the soldiers found it a heap of smouldering ruins; and instead of the welcome of wives and children, silence and desolation reigned supreme. The loyalty and devotion which he had never failed to receive from his followers were suddenly changed to vinegar and gall. But this was the moment of his return to God. In that dread hour, with the charred embers smoking at his feet; with this threat of stoning in his ears; his heart suddenly sprang back into its old resting place in the bosom of God. From this moment David is himself again, his old strong, glad, noble self. For the first time, after months of disuse, he bids Abiathar bring him the ephod, and he enquires of the Lord. With marvellous vigour he arises to pursue the marauding troop, and he overtakes it. He withholds the impetuosity of his men till daylight wanes, loosing them from the leash in the twilight, and leading them to the work of rescue and vengeance with such irresistible impetuosity that not a man of them escaped. He was sweet as well as strong, as courteous as he was brave. (1 Sam. xxx., 26). The sunshine of God's favour rested afresh upon his soul. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *Disaster and deliverance*:—To what fluctuations, what ebbs and flows of spiritual power, the same man is subject! Moral victories are often succeeded by terrible weaknesses. Days differ not so much as the men who live through them. Elijah flung himself beneath the juniper in unbelieving despondency directly after the fire from heaven had honoured his faith in God. I. **DAVID NURSING DOUBT.** The pendulum of his faith has swung right back. His heroism, patience, and fortitude are gone. He turns his face and feet toward the enemies of Israel. Tides are not the sport of chance, nor is David's declension. No man retreats before a conquered enemy unless there be reason and cause. 1. God is not consulted. "David said in his heart" (ver. 1). He omitted to lay the case before God, and turned to commune with his own heart. He is simply a man moved by his fears and inclinations. How they shut us out from prayer! To the busy no time, to the perplexed no need, to the anxious no use. How hurriedly we move to obey these promptings when once admitted! If David's inclinations tended towards Gath, he would not wish to ask God. Do not affect surprise; plunge the test right into your life. Are you afraid lest the answer from God should be against your inclinations? 2. Indifference to past mercies. "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Unbelief finds voice here—open, blank, base, ungrateful unbelief! What reason had David to doubt God's care for and over him? 3. Doubt thus led David to draw false conclusions. "There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." The Seventh Psalm shows us how he suffered at this period of his life. II. **DISTRICT OF GOD PREPARES THE WAY FOR DECEIT.** Doubt brought forth deceit. Deceit led to cruelty (ver. 11). He slew the Amalekites, "so that none should tell the king." 1. Deceit producing difficulty. Achish tells David he must join with his people and fight against Israel (xxvii. 1), and, moreover, appoints him captain of his bodyguard (ver. 2). Deceit weaves difficulties which bind as chains. How could David go forward? Christian, you went with the multitude to do evil, and since then you have found the way of transgressors is hard. III. **DISASTER FOLLOWING, AND YET PRODUCING DELIVERANCE.** While David was away, the Amalekites, seizing their opportunity, pillaged and destroyed Ziklag. Home destroyed, wives and children gone, wounded where most susceptible in his affections, it was no wonder David "was greatly distressed." If this was an hour of bitterness, it was also a blessed hour. Repentance does not always follow sorrow for sin—never, only in a gracious heart. David's faith, chained down during these last sixteen months, sprang up through the gloom, and in the day of sorrow made itself heard. (H. E. Stone.)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vers. 1—25. **The Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel.**—*Night preceding battle*:—As the flash of

lightning reveals the hidden scenery around, so the reception of momentous news suddenly reveals character. Two such events we trace—the news of the terrible defeat brought to Saul, and the news of Saul's death brought to David. Leading his people to meet the Philistines, at whose number he is astonished and affrighted, we come upon Saul as his army is encamped on the slopes of Gilboa. We notice:—I. DIVINE DIRECTION SOUGHT (ver. 6). In all former difficulties Saul had sought Samuel. The prophet's voice was hushed. Few estimate faithful advisers at their value. Saul had no Samuel now. He knew not God. His desolateness is indescribable. His own hand had closed the avenues along which the angel of mercy had been wont to come. Yet, as Cowper says, "In agony nature is no atheist;" so this desolate and moody man kneels to God! Self-will, pride, resentment lurk in his petition (ver. 15). He has no wish to know God's will, only how he may be successful! Complaints against God's dealings—there is no prayer in such words! Is it ever any use coming thus to seek God's help? Merely for our own selfish ends, asking the Divine One to become partner in our self-seeking purposes! Come, let us hold our prayers up to the light! Not every one that saith, "Lord, Lord," will enter into the Kingdom. Unable to bear the silence, Saul exhibits the—II. DESPERATE DEFIANCE OF DISOBEDIENCE. In those days when his vision was clear and his heart open to Divine teaching he abhorred this sin. Driven by fear, jealousy, and pride, refusing to humble himself before God, he sends his servant to find "one that hath a familiar spirit" (ver. 7.) Superstition takes the place of obedient faith. The four theories concerning this scene may thus be summarised—(1) that Samuel actually appeared by the Divine will; (2) that Saul was then granted a vision by Divine power, in which he saw, as in a dream, the prophet; (3) that which attributes it to Satanic agency; and the last, that it was an imposture conceived and carried out by Abner and his mother. The narrative itself seems clearly to establish the fact of Samuel's appearance. Samuel's reply is a refusal! In solemn words Samuel reminds Saul of the removal of God's favour: "The Lord is on the side of thy neighbour" (ver. 16). The Lord keepeth His word, and hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand (ver. 17). Death and disaster are thy portion" (vers. 18, 19). Could a greater proof be given of God's refusal to hear. III. DISOBEDIENCE ENDS IN DISASTER. Did not our fathers fall in the wilderness through unbelief? Is that not why so many fail to enter the life of joy? 1. Disobedience produced direst misery. In the path of disobedience we become targets for the archers of Satan. 2. Disobedience culminated in suicide. The inhabitants of hell are surely suicides. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. Ye would not come unto Me, that ye might have life." (H. E. Stone.)

Ver. 6. **The Lord answered him not.**—*God's silence*:—I. A FREQUENT EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO SEEK GOD. It is neither an universal nor invariable one, else prayer would become impossible. But it is sufficiently frequent to occasion grave spiritual difficulty. 1. In apparent contradiction of Divine promise. Of Israel, even in Egypt, it was said, "I will surely hear their cry" (Exod. xxii. 23). (Zech. x. 1). (Ps. lxxxvi. 7). How strong are the assurances of Christ. (Matt. vii. 7-11). 2. Disastrous in its effect upon the life of the soul. If it be true that "where there is no vision the people perish," equally so is it that when no Divine voice speaks to the soul it must cease to live. As the plant withers in the gloom of the cellar, the soul that knows not the sunshine of the Father's smile cannot be healthy or vigorous. 3. A source of uneasiness and sorrow. It is not only right but in the best sense natural that man should seek God; there is no deeper source of dissatisfaction and restlessness than a baffled instinct. II. AN EXPERIENCE TO BE INTERPRETED. Even the silence of God has a meaning. Rightly interrogated it may prove a precious revelation. In any case the possibilities are too grave for the "sign" to be neglected. 1. God is sometimes supposed to be silent when He is not. Answers to prayer are not always at once or easily apparent. 2. His silence is not always a token of displeasure. It may be simply (1) directive; our request unwise, etc. Or it may be (2) stimulative; as when the Syro-phenician woman grew importunate when He "answered her nothing." 3. Yet it is often expressive of Divine wrath. It must not be regarded as a light thing. 1. It may be intended to invite to inward examination and repentance. Some unfaithfulness; a falling from grace; it may be direct disobedience. The Holy One is saying, by His silence, "Come up higher. I cannot speak to you there!" 2. It sometimes occurs, as in the case of Saul, in token of doom. The

gracious lips of Christ were silent before a Pilate and a Herod. (A. F. Muir, M.A.) *A silent god*:—1. Calamity may be borne. We can oppose it to our manhood and our constancy. Menaced by shipwreck, we can breast the storm. To be defeated in battle, to be superseded in power, to see popularity crumbling into indifference—all this and more Saul had to bear, and all this may be borne. "If God be on my side," any one may say to all the world, "I care nothing for all the rest." Did not great Martin Luther cry: "Oh! my God, punish me rather with pestilence, with all the terrible sicknesses on earth, with war, with anything, rather than Thou be silent to me?" "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not." Ah! that is to be desolate indeed! 2. There are some whom God does not answer because they do not care to inquire of Him at all. The earth suffices them. Life is their feeding trough, and they care nothing for more. They never care to look beyond the narrow horizon of themselves. 3. When Saul inquired of the Lord, we are told that the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Dreams were the lowest form of revelation: yet we have so many closer modes of communion with God, in His Christ and by His Spirit, that of dreams we need not speak. Have no messages of Scripture ever seemed suddenly to burn their revelation upon your souls? Yes, God does speak to us by Urim still, and He also speaks to us by His prophets. And can you wonder that, if this be so, God, whom you have despised, and whose laws you have deliberately and habitually violated, should not only be silent to you at last? God never turns from the cry of the penitent, however bad he may have been. Distinguish between God's apparent silences for His children, and the self-created silence of your own to those who utterly refuse Him. Oh, let us beware lest we feel the awful silence which is not God's, but arises from our own obstinate and determined wickedness, that it may not overwhelm us. (Dean Farrar.) *Communications threatened*:—During a heavy snowstorm the warning was sent out that in a few hours the wet, heavy snow would break down the telephone and telegraph wires, and cut off communication with the outside world. Instantly there was a great rush to the telephones and the telegraph offices to get messages off before it was too late. What if we knew that very soon God would refuse to hear any more prayers; would there not be a great rush to the throne of grace to send our petitions heavenward before we were cut off for ever. (*Christian Endeavour Times*.)

Vers. 7—25. **Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit.**—*Saul and the witch of Endor*:—This narrative is unlike any other in the Bible, and therefore, as might have been expected, has received various explanations. Three of them may be briefly noticed: (1) That Samuel himself appeared to the mistress of necromancy in Endor, and predicted to Saul his death on the morrow; (2) That an evil spirit, or demon, personating Samuel, appeared to the woman and predicted to Saul his death. (3) That the woman, being a ventriloquist, described such an apparition as the king would suppose to be that of Samuel, and then made her words seem to come from the place where the apparition was imagined to be. 1. In favour of the first interpretation may be urged the *prima facie* meaning of the narrative. For the sacred writer says that "the woman saw Samuel" (v. 12); that when she described the apparition seen by her "Saul knew it was Samuel" (v. 14); that the prophet reproached Saul for "disquieting and bringing him up" (v. 15); and that the prophet foretold the defeat of Israel and the death of Saul and his sons on the morrow (v. 19), both of which came to pass. These are strong reasons, and if they are set aside, it should be in view of others that are stronger. What, then, are some of the arguments against this explanation of the narrative? God had forbidden the practice of necromancy in Israel, and had commanded those who practised the same to be stoned (Lev. xx., 27; Deut. xviii., 10, 11). Again, Saul himself was acquainted with this law of Jehovah, and had attempted to execute it (vv. 3-9). Still further, God had rejected the king, and had refused to answer him by any of the usual and appointed ways of making known His will (v. 6). And, besides, there is no indication in this narrative that Saul was now, at last, penitent, so that a message from God might be expected to control or benefit him. Certainly the refusal of God to answer Saul by dreams, by the Urim, or by the prophets, the wilful disobedience of the king in the act of consulting the woman, and the close connection of Samuel's appearance (if real) with the agency of this evil woman, are moral objections to this view of the

passage. Moreover, it will scarcely be denied that the words, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" do not seem perfectly natural as the language of a true prophet coming back from the Unseen with a Divine message, while they do seem entirely natural as words spoken in behalf of a pretended apparition by the enchantress herself. Again, if the woman was really and greatly amazed by the apparition of Samuel, as she well might be if it was real, it is somewhat singular that she was so prudent and self-collected afterwards. 2. In favour of the second explanation, that an evil spirit, personating Samuel, appeared to the woman, and predicted to Saul his defeat and death on the morrow, we can say but little of a positive character. It is, however, free from some of the objections which lie against the first. For on this hypothesis God does not connect a revelation of the future through his own prophet with an act of desperate disobedience on the part of Saul, or with a practice so solemnly prohibited as necromancy. For all the parties concerned are given up to evil. "That the devil, by the Divine permission, should be able to personate Samuel is not strange, since he can transform himself into an angel of light! Nor is it strange that he should be permitted to do it upon this occasion, that Saul might be driven to despair, by enquiring of the devil, since he would not, in a right manner, inquire of the Lord, by which he might have had comfort. Had this been the true Samuel, he could not have foretold the event, unless God had revealed it to him; and, though it were an evil spirit, God might by him foretell it; as we read of an evil spirit that foresaw Ahab's fall at Ramoth-Gilead, and was instrumental in it." 3. In favour of the third explanation several things may be alleged. 1. The king was in a state of mind which would render deception on the part of the sorceress easy. He believed in necromancy, and in the testimony of his servants that this woman was a mistress of necromancy. He was also afraid and exceedingly anxious to obtain some clue to the future from the invisible world, especially by means of Samuel, whom he knew to be a prophet. 2. The woman of Endor was most likely to have known of the extraordinary stature of Saul, of the degeneracy of his character and fortunes, of the perilous condition of his army, and of the dress of Samuel in his old age. 3. With this knowledge she would have been tolerably sure to detect the person of Saul in spite of his disguise, and would have laid her plan of action accordingly. 4. It would have been easy for her as a ventriloquist to make the prostrate king suppose that her changed voice came from an unseen form at a slight remove from the place where she stood. 5. For Saul himself, it will be observed, did not see the alleged apparition of Samuel; he but inferred it from the woman's description of what she professed to see rising out of the earth. 6. The woman's animosity towards Saul, because of his "putting away the necromancers and wizards out of the land" may have led her to wish his death, and the circumstances in which he was now placed by the Philistines may have emboldened her to say what she did. But in declaring Saul's doom she was personating Samuel, and must therefore speak as he might have been expected to speak, reminding Saul of his past disobedience to God, of God's displeasure with him on that account, of God's giving the throne to David, and of the certain death which awaited Saul and his sons on the morrow. 7. The fulfilment of her words may have been partly due to the despair which they produced in the mind of Saul. At any rate, the fact of their fulfilment is not conclusive, in the circumstances, of their being a proper revelation beforehand of the purpose of God. (*A. Hovey, D.D.*) *Saul and the witch of Endor*:—At this period to which the text relates Saul was in great perplexity, owing to the want of some one through whom to obtain counsel from God. The affairs of Israel were at this time in a critical state. Their ancient adversaries, the Philistines, were mustering their forces. The moral degeneracy of Israel served to embolden the enemy. Let us now endeavour to point out some of the practical lessons which this remarkable narrative suggests. 1. The history forcibly teaches the solemn truth, that a man's day of grace is by no means invariably co-extensive with his life on earth. It is evident that at least for a time before Saul perished he was left to eat of the fruit of his own way, and to be filled with his own devices. The Spirit departed from him, and at the same time the Spirit of evil entered in and took full possession of him. After this there were no further means to be tried for his conversion. The king had outlived his time of opportunity, and God was departed from him. Saul's day of grace had then terminated; and, whilst you notice this, observe also the steps which led to this consummation: they were a progressive series of resistances offered to God's Spirit—repeated acts of provocation, the repetition of

refusals to hearken and to obey. There are numbers who are emboldened in a course of irreligion from the impression that it will be easy at some future time to turn and repent, and undergo the indispensable change, without which they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. On this account it becomes more necessary to repeat the warning, that the season for turning to the Lord may pass away, never to return, even before the stroke of death ushers the soul to its everlasting portion. 2. Again, the history before us is instructive as pointing out what act it was on the part of Saul which challenged his final and immediate punishment. From the narrative it appears it was the sin of witchcraft. But the peculiarity lies in this, that it was a sin which Saul had professedly abandoned, and against which he had proclaimed open war. Can we err in concluding from hence that sin is then more especially hateful to God when practised by one who knows its nature and has once deliberately purposed to forsake it? To fall back to the indulgence of a sin which you have once resolved to renounce is a sure way to provoke the heavy displeasure of God. 3. The narrative is full of instruction as to the folly of expecting conversion by miracle when it is not effected by ordinary means. The reappearance of Samuel availed nothing for Saul's conversion. The reanimated Prophet could not guide the man who had abandoned the guidance of God's own Spirit. Be not deceived to suppose that if unconverted by what God is doing for you now, you would be converted by any supernatural agency. Your conversion is possible now. It is the province of the Holy Ghost to effect it. Use the means you have. God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask. (*R. Bickersteth, D.D.*) *The witch of Endor*:—1. Let me explain what the belief about this woman of Endor was. In popular speech we speak of her as the witch of Endor, but a more accurate description would be the Necromancer. Among all races and nations in the ancient world witchcraft, necromancy, and all their allied magic arts were believed in and practised. In all heathen religions there was a place for diviners, augurs, and magicians, who by their arts professed to tell what was the will of the gods in any special enterprise. Never did Greek or Roman army go forth to battle till the omens had been sought and found to be favourable. Sometimes the diviners would profess to find the answer they were seeking for in the appearances of Nature in sea, or earth, or sky, sometimes in visions of the night, sometimes in the creatures slain as sacrifices; sometimes in the mysteries of the grave, like this woman; sometimes by strange, weird incantations or by mysterious rites and enchantments. In one or other of these ways men believed they could get to know the Divine will. 2. The next point I would touch on is the question, What is the significance of this so widespread a belief in necromancy and magic? It is now held, I believe, that these arts represent the first attempts of men to have converse with the unseen world, the first blind gropings of the soul after God, the first rude efforts of man's spirit towards a religion. Just as the science of chemistry with its wonderful discoveries of the secret and subtle forces of Nature had its beginning in the dreams and visions and impossible ambitions of the alchemists; or just as astronomy, which reveals the sublime order of the heavenly bodies, had its origin in the baseless imaginings of astrology, so religion in human history began in the practice of these magic arts. What God demands in those who come to Him is not the power of magic, but mercy, truth, righteousness in the heart. I. SAUL'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION. First of all, it throws light on the spiritual condition of Saul. He sought the aid of this necromancer because he despaired of any message from God. It is in times of religious decay that superstition most flourishes. When men lose faith in a living God who loves righteousness they resort to magic and sorcery, and put their faith in outward ceremonies and rites. Spiritualism is a reversion to the first and lowest forms of religious inquiry. Science tells us that when a plant or animal reverts to its original type, it suffers degeneration. And the spiritualist is one who is ignoring all the world's progress through ages of religious education, and is going back to the first, rude, low methods in which men sought communication with the Unseen. II. A WILFUL IMPOSTURE. The words in which the woman is described point to the means by which she might have carried out the imposture. Rendered literally, the words, "a woman who had a familiar spirit," read, "a woman a mistress of the Ob." And the word "Ob" denotes ventriloquism. No doubt the power of ventriloquism was believed to be supernatural, the gift of evil spirits. Then, for another thing, what the supposed ghost of the departed prophet revealed was in great part already well known to Saul, and may have been known to the woman. It needed no spirit from the grave to tell them. And as for the pre-

diction of Saul's death on the morrow, there are those who contend that the word rendered "to-morrow" is of indefinite meaning denoting some time in the future. The prediction that Saul and his sons would some day be with Samuel in the world of shadows was a safe prediction, like many of the ancient oracles. But the chief objection is simply to the idea that any arts possessed by the necromancer should have had power to call forth the dead. It is sometimes assumed that on this occasion God wrought a miracle through the woman in order to inform Saul of his fate. But this explanation is beset with insuperable difficulties. For according to it God would be doing just what He had refused to do. He would be "answering" Saul and satisfying his desire for a Divine communication. Again, it seems incredible that God should lend sanction to the pretensions of a necromancer when the practice of every such art was condemned under severest penalties by the Divine law. When we read the narrative in the light of these considerations, there is little difficulty in supposing that the whole thing was a wilful imposture practised on a wretched and despairing man. Keep clear thy faith in the Living God, the Righteous One and the Loving, and witchcraft and all other superstitions will be powerless over thee. But lose hold of God, and you may drift into any dark and debasing belief. (*J. Legge, M.A.*) *Lessons from the incident at Endor*: Solemn are the instructions to be gained from this incident. 1. We may have taken strong ground against some particular form of evil, we may have condemned it in others, and we may, thus far, have acted outwardly in consistency with God's commands; but we may live to do the very thing which we have condemned, to break the very commands to which we have given an external homage. There may be motives for putting away one particular form of sin, the operation of which may yet co-exist with a spirit unwilling to yield to the fear of God, and unaffected by his love. It was not because Saul's heart was prepared to render allegiance to God that he put away witchcraft; but because he would affect an outward regard for religion, or because he wished to avenge his mental disquietude on those whom he deemed its cause, or because he was in daily fear of some further mischief from them. The operation of these motives, and their result, still left him a rebel, prepared at any time, when the will of God crossed his own purpose, to resist the commands of the Almighty. And wherever the spirit of opposition to the Divine will is permitted, there is no security against its indulgence in any particular form; and if circumstances arise to make it convenient, it may develop itself in the identical manifestation which, in a previous stage of our history, we have been most ardent and loud in condemning. Let us be assured that no outward reformation is to be depended on, which do not issue from that radical change of which the Holy Spirit is the author, and in which the whole heart is yielded up to God. 2. We notice how certainly a man loses his own dignity in proportion as he recedes from the principle of obedience to God, and yields to the guidance of his own heart. What term so aptly describes the condition of the king of Israel in the witch's abode at Endor, as that of degradation—deep, thorough degradation. Be it ours to take warning. No station in life, however exalted—no position, however respectable—no claims on the regard of society, however strong—can stand against the degrading influence of indulged sin. 3. We are taught that mercies abused and privileges slighted may be desired when they have been withdrawn, and when, in God's providential arrangements, they are no longer within our reach. While Samuel lived, his counsel was treated with contempt; but when he could no longer be consulted, then the very man who grieved him most was most anxious to have him back at any cost. Let the sad spectacle awaken inquiry, How are you employing present mercies? (*J. A. Miller.*) *The religion of ghosts*:—I. I LEARN FIRST FROM THIS SUBJECT THAT SPIRITUALISM IS A VERY OLD RELIGION. What does God think of all these delusions? He thinks so severely of them that He never speaks of them but with livid thunders of indignation. He says: "I will be a swift witness against the sorcerer." He says: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." And lest you might make some important distinction between Spiritualism and witchcraft, God says, in so many words: "There shall not be among you a consulter of familiar spirits, or vizard, or necromancer; for they that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord." II. STILL FURTHER: WE LEARN FROM THIS TEXT HOW IT IS THAT PEOPLE COME TO FALL INTO SPIRITUALISM. Saul had enough trouble to kill ten men. He did not know where to go for relief. After awhile he resolved to go and see the witch of Endor. It was his trouble that drove him there. And I have to tell you now that spiritualism finds its victims in the troubled, the bankrupt, the sick, the bereft.

III. I LEARN STILL FARTHER FROM THIS SUBJECT, THAT SPIRITUALISM AND NECROMANCY ARE AFFAIRS OF THE DARKNESS. Why did not Saul go in the day? He was ashamed to go. Besides that, he knew that this spiritual medium, like all her successors, performed her exploits in the night. IV. STILL FURTHER, THAT SPIRITUALISM IS DOOM AND DEATH TO ITS DISCIPLES. King Saul thought that he would get help from the "medium;" but the first thing that he sees makes him swoon away, and no sooner is he resuscitated than he is told he must die. Spiritualism is doom and death to everyone that yields to it. It ruins the body. Spiritualism smites first of all, and mightily, against the nervous system, and so makes life miserable. V. I INDICT SPIRITUALISM ALSO, BECAUSE IT IS A SOCIAL AND MARITAL CURSE. The worst deeds of licentiousness and the worst orgies of obscenity have been enacted under its patronage. VI. I FURTHER INDICT SPIRITUALISM FOR THE FACT THAT IT IS THE CAUSE OF MUCH INSANITY. VII. I BRING AGAINST THIS DELUSION A MORE FEARFUL INDICTMENT: IT RUINS THE SOUL IMMORTAL. The whole system, as I conceive it, is founded on the insufficiency of the Word of God as a revelation. God says the Bible is enough for you to know about the future world. God has told you all you ought to know, and how dare you be prying into that which is none of your business? You cannot keep the Bible in one hand and spiritualism in the other. One or the other will slip out of your grasp, depend upon it. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Saul at Endor*:—The worlds are nearer together than we think! What is there in reason, in the fitness of things, or in Scripture itself, to forbid the idea that we are surrounded by spiritual existences? What is thy universe, O man? Thou makest thine own creation. The pathetic incident shows:—I. THE RAPIDITY WITH WHICH A MAN MAY FALL FROM THE HIGHEST EMINENCE. "Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day." There is but a step between thee and death! II. THE AWFUL POSSIBILITY OF BEING CUT OFF FROM SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE DIVINE AND INVISIBLE. "God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams." III. THE CERTAINTY THAT ONE DAY THE IMPENITENT WILL WANT THEIR OLD TEACHERS. "Bring me up Samuel." "I have called thee that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do." The solemn lesson of the whole is—Seek ye the Lord while He may be found! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Spiritualism a folly*:—To meddle with the walls of separation that God has built is a wrong and sinful thing. We have no business but in our own world. This dabbling in spiritualism and communication with the departed is nothing more than folly. It is unlawful, and has all the consequences of a broken law. There was an old Scotch body, who was sitting by the deathbed of her only son. Trying to comfort the grieving mother, the dying boy said: "Mother, if so be it's permitted, I'll come from the dead to see thee." "Na, na, lad," she exclaimed; "keep to your ain side." It was a wise injunction. Keep to your own side. (*J. Robertson.*)

Ver. 11. **Bring me up Samuel.**—*Samuel after death*:—Wise reasons must have prevailed with God for the appearance of Samuel. Dr. Hales has suggested the three following: 1. To make Saul's crime the instrument of his punishment, in the dreadful denunciation of his approaching doom. 2. To show to the heathen world the infinite superiority of the Oracle of the Lord inspiring his prophets over the powers of darkness, and the delusive prognostics of their wretched votaries in their false oracles. 3. To confirm the belief in a future state, by "one who rose from the dead," even under the Mosaic dispensation. Taking the view now represented, we may draw some practical conclusions from it. 1. The soul lives after death. Samuel's appearance showed that his soul still lived, though his body had died at Ramah, and had been buried. 2. It is vain to pray to the dead. Scripture gives no encouragement to this practice. This passage, and one in the New Testament, show the utter hopelessness of finding comfort by this means. The word of God reveals the mercy-seat; and a prayer-hearing God invites the sinner to ask mercy in the name of Jesus. "If any man sin, he has an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). 3. There is no oracle of the future but God's. No evil spirit can reveal the destiny of a soul, nor could he be trusted. No light that led astray was ever light from heaven. The father of lies could not be entitled to credit in his disclosures of our future. Departed saints are incapable of doing

this. They have not such a function assigned to them in the economy of the spiritual world. (*R. Steel.*) *Saul in the cave at Endor*:—I. THIS IS THE CRY OF A SOUL CONSCIOUSLY DESERTED OF GOD. "The Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." 1. God does sometimes desert the sinner even in this world. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." 2. The consciousness of this desertion is the greatest misery. There is no orphanage so bad as the orphanage of a soul—a soul that has lost its God. It lives to sink deeper and deeper for ever into ruin. II. THIS IS THE CRY OF A SOUL PROFOUNDLY CONVINCED OF THE VALUE OF A ONCE NEGLECTED MINISTRY. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escaped not," &c. III. THIS IS THE CRY OF A SOUL THAT HAD BECOME THE VICTIM OF DELUSIONS. The man's mind under a sense of guilt and Divine desertion had lost its balance; his intellect had been hurled from the throne, and his imagination, under the despotism of a guilty conscience, filled his soul with ghastly phantoms. Men talk of a sound mind in a sound body, but there is no sound mind without a sound conscience—a conscience freed from the sense of guilt, and attuned to the everlasting harmonies of right. Reason in the atmosphere of a guilty conscience is like the eye amidst the shower of pyrotechnic lights, dazzled with false visions. As we build up our houses and our cities out of the rough materials taken from the earth, so the imagination of a mind consciously deserted by God will build up its world of woe out of the corrupt materials of its own heart. IV. THIS IS THE CRY OF A SOUL PLUNGING INTO THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR. When despair comes, a hopeless darkness settles over the soul. The course of sin leads to despair. Every sin a man commits he quenches a star in the firmament of hope. The moral of the whole is this—the well-being of humanity consists in loving fellowship with the Eternal Father. (*Homilist.*) *Without God, without hope*:—This was a cry wrung from the heart of a man who believed himself forsaken by God. "His soul was orphaned, "without God in the world." 1. Have you never felt that orphanage—when God seems to have gone out from your heavens, and the universe appears a vast, sunless, godless infinite, black as night? The world without a sun! The flower-stems bend over filled with icy tears shed for the loss of the sun that gave them all their colours, the bleached leaves hang without a flutter in the still, cold air, or fall rotting in the dark, the cattle of the field perish for lack of sweet food and soft warmth, and the shivering hearts of men freeze within them—for the sun died last night. A soul without God, in awful solitude, starless, sunless. If you have felt that orphanage, and lived through doubt and despair to believe in God, happy are you. If you have never known it, happy are you also. 1. Saul was without God in his soul—he was alone; what should he do? Do! What could he do? Why could he not be quiet, and stop still? The sun would not for ever be on the under side of the world, the night would not last for ever. One of the most fruitful errors of mankind is that irrepressible desire to do something; men cannot wait. Pascal said that most of life's evils sprang from "man's being unable to sit still in a room." This restless inquiet is the cause of business depression; men must speculate, "do something;" there was a mania for excessive action. 2. Saul would do something, no matter what! He would seek a witch, and she would raise up Samuel to him. Ill omens crowd his mind, and his heart fell when he heard the mysterious seer from the after-world add his ghostly word to his own too sad prevision of disaster and ruin on the morrow. He needs no ghost to tell him that, 'tis already too surely known. Oh, power of conscience! A guilty conscience fills the soul with phantoms that are tongued with evil. The torture of a bad conscience is the hell of a soul. Conscience speaks in whispers; but, if unheeded, its whispers echo quickly back and back from the close walls of the dark prison-house of the soul, until, gathering strength, they reverberate like sounds of volleying thunder. Small as an earth-worm, conscience may swell, until at last it becomes a great stinging serpent. 3. Hope is belief in God; hope is the anchor of the soul, which, tossed on the rolling ocean that is full to bursting, and driven helpless by the wind that is wet with storms, is steady, for deep buried in God's bosom is the anchor, trust in our Father in heaven. The wise ancients said that Hope was the only gift left in Pandora's box; it is the last thing that dies in a man. To lose hope is to lose oneself. By hope are we saved. Be not ashamed to hope; hope the highest things. Such is our Christian duty. A soul losing hope in God is like a traveller going down some mountain-side as the broadening sun sets behind him; at his every step his shadow widens,

lengthens, blackens, till at last he is shrouded in midnight darkness, and with way lost, tumbles over the crag into ruin. Hope then in God; doubt but hastens peril. Look up, out of thyself; and learn that the darkness is thine own, that the heavens glow with light. Thou despairest of good, saying that there is no sun? Open thy closed eyes, the darkness is in thine own soul only. Despair is the only atheism; hopelessness is unbelief in God; Hope thou; that is, believe in God; he that believeth not is damned. But hope, which is the presence of God, never dies—never. (B. J. Snell, M.A.)

Ver. 14. **And Saul perceived that it was Samuel.**—*The appearance of Samuel*:—This is altogether a strange and mysterious scene. It is a difficult and much debated question how we are to understand it. One or two remarks are all that can be offered here. In the first place, there is no ground whatever for supposing a collusion between the woman and Saul's two servants. Nor, secondly, is it at all tenable that Satan appeared, personating Samuel. Whether, then, shall we hold that the whole phenomena both of sight and sound formed a vision presented supernaturally by God; or an actual and literal occurrence? Of visions there were two principal varieties: First, a symbolic representation seen in a trance, such as that presented to Peter (Acts x.) or those brought before the rapt mind of John (Rev.) Of this kind the scene before us could not be an example. The figure is not symbolic. The state of mind is calm and self-possessed. Secondly, a miraculous sight of objects real and present. Of this sort were the vision of Zacharias (Luke i.); of the angels at the tomb (Luke xxiv. 23); and of Moses and Elijah on the mount (Matth. xvii. 9.) In this latter sense, the vision does not differ much from the literal understanding of the occurrence. To the objection—that it was unjust to Samuel to “disquiet” him thus, it may be answered that the word refers only to his change of place in its outward aspect, and does not necessarily imply the endurance of pain. To the other objection—that the figure was seen “ascending out of the earth” and could not therefore represent the soul of Samuel, it may yet be deemed satisfactory to say that the earth being the resting-place of the body, and the figure appearing in the character of a body, it was natural to present the mysterious apparition as emerging from the ground; and that, whatever may be thought of this, the objection holds equally against the visional supposition. The last objection calling for notice takes higher ground, and the answer to it will lead us in among the moral purposes served by this mysterious transaction. ‘It was neither worthy of God, nor fitted to secure objects important enough to commend to our reason an interposition such as the literary theory implies.’ It will be seen at once that any answer which disposes satisfactorily of the second branch of the objection will be valid against the first. Now we shall not have to go far in quest of important ends actually served by the occurrence. 1. A stern rebuke to Saul. The guilty man had recourse to an agency which his conscience condemned, and which his own recent enactment proscribed as unlawful, and punished capitally as impious. The holy God met him in the face on that forbidden ground, in that unhallowed work. And to be confronted thus must have filled him with overwhelming confusion. The tender-hearted prophet denounced him without reserve or mitigation. And rebukes never fall so crushingly, or with such condemning evidence of their justice, as from the lips of forbearing gentleness. 2. A solemn rehearsal of the law which regulated the national fortunes. Calamity came in the wake of sin. The holy King of heaven constituted them a people on that basis. His command was broken signally in the case of Amalek. This dreadful offence was yet pouring out its vials of vengeance on the land. The catastrophe announced by Samuel as immediately to occur was to exhaust the dregs of this vengeance on the doomed dynasty of Saul. How wisely adapted to strike through their conscience the conviction that this great calamity was strictly punitive. 3. Proof that the God of Israel over-ruled all agencies of evil. It is indeed a mysterious thing, and unexampled, that the holy Jehovah should be a party in a scene like this. The same sovereign authority laid hold on Balaam, and made the bad man a true prophet. 4. An exhibition of important facts from the spiritual world. The existence of the soul after death; the continuance of all its powers, and among them memory—stored with the recollections of the past; the perpetuation of moral and spiritual character. (P. Richardson, B.A.) *The appearance of Samuel to Saul at Endor*:—There has been a great variety of sentiments among the learned, and very different accounts have been given of this famed adventure. I. THE TRUTH OF THE

CASE. Some have thought that there was nothing more in it than trick and legerdemain, whereby a cunning woman imposed upon Saul's credulity. But this opinion is highly improbable. For, if the woman had the sole conducting of that affair, intending only to impose upon Saul, she would most undoubtedly have contrived to make the pretended Samuel's answer as agreeable and pleasing to the King as possible, and that for her own sake especially; for fear of offending Saul, and to save her own life, as well as to procure from Him the larger gratuity. For it must be observed further, that what was here spoken as from Samuel was really prophetic, and was punctually fulfilled a few days after. None but God Himself could have revealed the secret. And how unlikely is it that God should make use of this sorceress as a prophetess, and should give her the honour of revealing his counsels. For these reasons, we may presume to think and judge that the matter here related was not all a mere juggle or contrivance of an artful woman, but something more. There was most certainly an apparition in the case, either of Samuel's ghost, or of some other spirit personating Samuel. I incline to think that Samuel really appeared. The reasons for this interpretation are as follow:—

1. This method of proceeding is very conformable to what God had been pleased to do before, in other cases of like nature. As Balak had recourse to sorceries and divinations in hopes to procure some relief, or fair promises at least from them. In like manner when King Ahaziah had sent to consult Baalzebub, the demon of Ekron, to know whether he should recover of the sickness he then lay under, hoping, no doubt, to obtain a favourable answer there, as probably he might have done; God Himself took care to anticipate the answer by Elijah the Prophet, who assured the messengers, meeting them by the way, that their master Ahaziah should not recover, but should surely die. Thus probably was it in the case of Saul.
2. This interpretation is plain and natural, and least forced of any, agreeing well with the words of the text. The story is here told in such a way as one would expect to find, upon the supposition it really was Samuel. So that if we consider the letter of the text, and the most obvious and natural construction of it we shall be obliged to confess that the apparition was really Samuel and no other.
3. This construction is very ancient, the most ancient of any; and seems indeed to have been the general persuasion of the Jewish Church long before the coming of Christ. (Eccles. 46, 20.) In the same sentiments was Josephus the Jewish historian, who lived in the apostle's times; and thus thought many of the earliest Christian fathers.

II. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. It is objected that one text speaks of bringing up Samuel as it were out of the ground; whereas, if it had been Samuel, he should rather have come down from heaven. But the true reason why Samuel is represented as being brought up is because his body was under ground, to which his soul was still conceived to bear a relation; and it was upon this chiefly, that the popular prevailing notion of all separate souls being in the heart of the earth, was founded.

2. But it is further objected that the apparition here in the person of Samuel complains to Saul of being disquieted or disturbed by him. But God Almighty, with whom the spirits of just men made perfect dwell, might please to send Samuel upon that occasion, to deliver the message from him.
3. But it is further objected that it is hard to give a reason why God, who had refused to answer Saul either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets, should at length vouchsafe to answer him in such a way as this, and by the mediation of a wicked sorceress. But it may be easy to account for God's answering Saul in this way, as it was exposing and afflicting him more severely than in any other, after he had richly deserved it.
4. But it is still further objected that the predictions of the apparition, under the name of Samuel, were not true, and therefore could not be Samuel's. But the things foretold were exactly verified, and the event answered to the prophecy in every particular. The things came to pass four or five days after. It says, To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me. But it is acknowledged by the best critics that the word which we render in English, to-morrow, may as well be rendered very shortly, which it really signifies in this place.
5. Well, but is it not said, To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me? Was Saul, then, so wicked a man, to go after death to the same blessed place with righteous Samuel? The text determines nothing at all of the state of either after death. All that is meant by the words, Thou shalt be with me, is, Thou shalt die; and so it proved.

III. PRACTICAL USES. 1. Observe how careless and unthinking men are apt to be in their prosperity, and till the hour of distress comes. 2. That in such cases, generally, God very justly turns away His ear, and will vouchsafe no answer in the ordinary

way, to such grievous offender. 3. Observe, further, how miserable, how melancholy a thing it is for a man to have sinned to such a degree as to be entirely abandoned by God, and to have the best friend in the world become his enemy. The practical conclusion from the whole is that we learn to set a true value upon God's favour and friendship, and that we use our utmost endeavours both to procure and to preserve it. (*D. Waterland, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **God is departed from me.**—"Without God in the world":—It is not in the power of language to depict a more terrible and hopeless condition for a rational creature to be in than that set forth in these five words of Scripture. And the climax of Paul's description of man's unregenerate state is: "Having no hope, and without God in the world." Let us glance at the true meaning and significance of the words. 1. They do not mean that God has absolved them from all obligation—no longer sustains relations with them—has withdrawn His supervision and feels no concern on their account. For He holds them to strict account the same as with other men; He takes cognizance of their daily conduct, the same as if they were on terms of intimacy. 2. But they do mean: (1) The loss of God's favour. They are "aliens" from His love. He has no complacency in them. "God is not in all their thoughts." They live only by His sufferance. (2.) They do mean the withdrawal of His special presence, His Holy Spirit, the tokens of His favour, the recognition and inward consciousness that He is a friendly power with whom they have to do. There had been no signs or revelations declaring unto him the awful fact. So every ungodly man knows and feels. He needs no spirit to come up from the grave to herald it. (3.) They do mean that all friendly intercourse between God and themselves has ceased. Saul besought the Lord when disaster and calamity came upon him and his kingdom; but he sought in vain. 3. Glance at the awfulness of such a condition! (1.) To be "without God in the world" is to be destitute of every element of true happiness. (2.) To possess a character that has in it not one element of moral worth. (3.) To be at the mercy of all the forces of depravity, human and devilish, with no defence, no shield, nothing to mitigate the evil. (4.) To be not only friendless and miserable "in the world" but "without hope" for eternity. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) **Humanity consciously deserted of God:**—There are two stages in the history of human depravity. 1. Man deserts God. God calls, and man refuses. 2. God deserts man. The Eternal departs from him, which means a discontinuance of the overtures of His love, and His agencies to restore; it is leaving man to himself, to reap the labour of his own hands; it is the physician giving up the patient; the tender father closing the door against his reprobate child. In the first stage, we find the vast majorities of mankind in every age; in the second, we may find some on earth, in every period. This stage is hell. The first stage is probation; the second stage is retribution. This second and final stage Saul had reached. All guiding oracles were hushed to him. The Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Deep is the necessity he feels for supernatural help. He feels himself deserted by God. This passage presents three considerations concerning mankind in this state. I. THAT HUMANITY UNDER A CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD'S DESERTION WILL EVER BE IMPRESSED WITH THE NEED OF THE FORFEITED MEANS OF DIVINE COMMUNION. There was a time when Saul had communications with his Maker. The prophets were accessible to him. He could consult the Urim on the breast of the high priest; but he had lost all now: he had slain the high priest; Samuel was dead; the Spirit of the Lord forsook him, and the heavens were closed against him. How deep and earnest is the cry, "Bring me up Samuel." Oh! for one word from God now. Oh! that I could have but one more message from those sealed heavens. The deep cry of humanity, under a consciousness that God had deserted it, is, "Oh! that I knew but where I might find him." Captives away in Babylon, how did the Jews value the temple which, perhaps, they often neglected when at home? Sinner, value and improve the means of Divine communion now: God is speaking to you, through ministers, the Bible, and other books. II. THAT HUMANITY, UNDER A CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD'S DESERTION, BECOMES THE SUBJECT OF FEARFUL DELUSIONS. Such delusions seem to me to spring naturally from his excited state of mind. 1. It presented a vivid vision of the teacher whose counsels had been neglected. The imagination of a conscience-stricken sinner will bring old teachers from their graves, give them voice, and make them speak again. 2. It proclaimed the sin and pronounced the doom. (v. 16-19.) Imagination now

gives a voice of thunder to all this whispering of conscience. Imagination is a terrible faculty, when swayed by a guilty conscience. What visions it can unfold! It can create a subjective world, whose firmament is "black as sackcloth," whose tenants are fiends, whose stormy atmosphere is rent by lightnings and loaded with shrieks of anguish. III. THAT HUMANITY, UNDER A CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD'S DESERTION, MUST SINK INTO UNMITIGATED DESPAIR. Here is despair prostrating the man. The guilty mind, in despair, loses three elements of power. 1. Hope. What an inspiring element is this! How it sustains under trial! How it stimulates in enterprise! 2. Purpose. Mind is only powerful and happy as it has some purpose to engage its attention and energies: but in despair there is no purpose; the mind looks abroad on the dark universe and finds nothing to do. 3. Sympathy. A God-deserted mind has no sympathy: all hearts recoil from a sin-convicted soul, and it turns in upon itself. (*Homilist.*) *Abandoned of God*:—It is the saddest, the most despairing confession that ever fell from human lips. We can sympathise with the bitterness of the more ordinary losses and bereavements of men. But we cannot rise to the full agony of Saul's confession, nor sympathise with the sadness and hopelessness of spirit that wail through it, like the winds through the vaults of the dead. I. WE CONSIDER THE DEPARTURE OF GOD. There are two sets of moral forces in the world contending with each other for the possession of the spirit of man, called in Scripture the one, the powers of the world to come; the other, the powers of this present evil world. The former is a holy beneficent order of influences which have their source in the nature and life of God; the latter is a destructive, despoiling, degrading order. Now, just as the laws and forces of the material world build up the external economy of things, so do these two sets of influences mould and form human character. They are obviously diametrically opposed to each other in their aim and tendency; they try to bear and pull the spirit of life in each man in opposite directions. What therefore had happened in the experience of Saul was this: that the set of virtues or holy energies that have their origin in God and that pull men Godward, had ceased to strive for the possession of his spirit; and had left him to the undisputed sovereignty of the powers of this present evil world. And look at what happened in the nature of Saul when God had departed from him in this sense—the only sense in which God ever departs from a man. His once fine and brave and manly nature—manly and brave and fine as long as God stayed to make and keep it so—grew suspicious and bitter and restless, and filled with slavish fear. It is a law which holds for all time, which is as fixed and unalterable as the laws of the physical universe; it is an eternal law that separation from God involves moral disorder, and the tyranny of all the destroying influences that prey upon human hearts. Saul's experience unfolds to us what would happen did God depart from the social life of to-day, be it village life, or commercial life, or court life; did He depart from any of the spheres of life where men meet and associate and deal with men. Society is impossible without the felt presence of God, warring against sin and keeping it down in the hearts of men. And in the case of the individual, too, every kind of moral disorder and wretchedness is involved in the departure of God. The individual soul is the realm of God's most holy and blessed activities. Oh, it is fearful when God, as the moral force in the soul, departs from a man; for in this world there is a great conspiracy and confederacy against our truest good, the cunning of which God alone can baffle and God alone can confound. Without Him our very conceptions of righteousness will be unworthy; our consciences will get seared, as though a hot iron had passed over them, deadening their sensitive papillæ; our hearts will give birth to bad devices, unholy plans, and thoughts of lawless and forbidden pleasures. Our whole nature will get cankered and corrupted, unless the sweet, refreshing waters of life are ever circulating in us. In short, there is no crime or sin which is not possible to, and likely to happen in, the life of the man from whom God has departed. II. WE HAVE NOW TO CONSIDER WHAT SAUL HAD DONE TO COMPEL GOD TO DEPART. It was Saul's disobedience and perverseness of temper that drove God away. By the requisite devices of overlooking, despising, rejecting, wearying, and tiring out the reproving presence of God's spirit in him, he had succeeded in making complete isolation between his soul and the Soul of souls. He determined against his better reason to keep his sins and his bad heart, and to take his own will and way. Never does the great Father of us all send an evil spirit into the hearts and minds of men. Every spirit that comes from God, comes of holy ministries of love and blessing; comes to strive to bring bad men under the power of goodness; comes to war a noble

warfare with the evil which Saul grappled to his soul as though it were his tried and adopted friend. What is it that turns God into a relentless foe? or, rather, what is it that so throws our eyes off the straight line of moral vision that we seem to see the great loving Father and a tyrant? We say, sin. Yes; but what kind of sin? Such sins as those of Noah, David, and Peter—drunkenness, lust and murder, falsehood and profanity—alienate God till the dark hour of anguish comes, but do not compel an absolute departure. The sin of Saul must have been the unpardonable one—the resolute refusal to surrender the spirit of our life into God's hands that we may be formed and shaped by Him. (*James Forfar.*) *Saul God forsaken*:—What a complication of calamities! What a deluge of distress and misery! I. REFLECT A MOMENT ON THE LANGUAGE OF HIS COMPLAINT. "The Philistines are come upon me." However disproportionate the forces of a defending army, a Christian king and a Christian people are secure. "A thousand shall fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, but it shall not come nigh them." But when a man forsakes the Lord until the season of distress, who can wonder if his repentance is destitute of the character of sincerity, and he is left to perish. "If ye walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you," is the threatening of that God who has justice as well as mercy. 1. But still, listen to his cry, "The Lord hath forsaken me." This is indescribably dreadful! Better that all the world should leave us, better that we lose our health, our strength, our property, our friends, than he forsaken of Him whose smile is Heaven, whose frown is hell. What a state of abandonment, what a state of orphanage! With no eye to pity, with no arm to save. But what follows from such withdrawal of the greatest and the best of Beings? Penal blindness of mind, hardness of heart, the uncontrolled sway of evil passions, left a prey to the tempter, and to the influence and associations of wicked men. But this is not all; hear him yet again: "And the Lord answers me not, neither by prophets nor by dreams." This, if possible, is still more distressing and dreadful than before. What a privilege is prayer! What must it be to have our prayers rejected. II. THE METHOD WHICH HE ADOPTED TO OBTAIN RELIEF. What a wretched expedient for soothing the anguish of a guilty conscience! And yet how often do we see subtleties, equally untenable and unsafe, resorted to by transgressors to stifle conviction, to prevent reflection, to silence the accusations of a guilty mind, and to obtain a little temporary relief. III. LET US NOW CONTEMPLATE HIS OVERTHROW—HIS MONITORY DEATH. What does this subject suggest for our mutual improvement? 1. How possible it is to live and die without hope in the world though surrounded by religious advantages. 2. We learn the awful consequences of rebellion against God. (*B. Leach.*) *Reprobation*:—I desire to set before you the end to which in this world allowed sin brings finally the impenitent man. Now that state is spoken of in God's Word under various awful descriptions. It is described as one in which the heart is hardened; as one in which a man is "given over to a reprobate mind;" in which he is "to every good work reprobate;" in which men "have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." They are spoken of as "reprobate concerning the faith;" as having "treasured up" for themselves "wrath against the day of wrath;" as having "grieved,"—yea, and "quenched,"—the "Holy Spirit of God." Now these passages of God's Word suffice of themselves to show that there is here in this world such a state as that of final impenitence: and what can be added to those words to describe its misery and horror! Yet it may be well for us, instead of simply resting in them, to examine more in detail wherein their fearfulness consists; that so, of God's mercy, we may be driven by the sight to cry to Him with greater earnestness to save us from all danger of falling ourselves into this most deadly state. 1. Now, in entering on this subject, we must remember what is involved in that certain truth which is set before us from one end of the Bible to the other, namely, that we, in this world, are really in a state of probation. 2. Now, mark how that probation is accomplished: (1.) We are placed amongst a multitude of outward things, which perpetually force us to choose whether we will act in this way or in that; and every one of these choices must agree with the holy and perfect Will of God, or be opposed to it. (2.) But then, further: the especial trial of us Christians consists in our being placed amongst these temptations under the personal influence of God the Holy Ghost; so that in every such distinct act of choice, there is either a direct yielding or a direct opposition to His secret suggestions. Moreover, these secret influences of His are described as the Power which does effectually mould those who yield to

them. Thus it is said that He "guides them into all truth." So that evermore He is with us; touching the inmost springs of our being; upholding and renewing our life in its highest fountain-head of existence; acting on us by restraint, by solicitation, by suggestion, by assistance in every choice. (3.) This, then, being our moral and spiritual probation, not only is every voluntary acting of our spirit in contradiction to God's Will a fixing of our will in opposition to His Will; but, further, it is in us a direct personal resistance to the action upon our souls of God the Holy Ghost. And the necessary consequence of every such act of resistance must, by a twofold process, carry us on towards final impenitence. For first, by our own moral constitution, the breaking through any restraint from evil, or the resisting any suggestion of good, carries us by an inevitable reaction somewhat farther than we were before in the opposite direction. This first; and then, and far beyond this, by thus resisting the Holy Spirit we cause Him to withdraw from us those influences for good in which is alone for us the spring and possibility of amendment. This is the awful truth contained in such exhortations as that of the Apostle—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Now the effect of such conduct on an earthly friend would be that it would lead him to withdraw himself from the intimate relationship of an undisturbed affection; and so we are taught that from the heart so resisting Him the Holy One withdraws Himself. Now as a necessary consequence of such a withdrawal, the progress of the forsaken soul towards final hardness is inevitable. The injured quality of the soil makes it need more urgently than before, if it is to yield any good upgrowth, the refreshment of cooling showers, and at that very time the decree has gone forth to the clouds of heaven that they rain no rain upon it. 3. What the downward process of such a soul must be we may see at once by recalling what we saw to be the Spirit's gracious influences upon one whom He was sanctifying, and so estimating the consequences of their withdrawal. For reproofs for sin would in such a heart sink first into a whisper, and then die out in silence. And as they expired the conscience would be struck with dumbness, and the first cause therefore of a saving penitence would be removed. Next, the secret voice teaching the heart, and reminding it of the words of Christ, would cease to speak; and with this would fail also those first drawings of the affections towards God, which are as the tender bud of a future penitence, and which can awaken only beneath the Cross of Christ, and within the sound of His words of love, as the Blessed Spirit reveals them to the soul. So that there would be in such a heart nothing to begin that work of true repentance, which without the aid of the good Spirit cannot originate in fallen man. Nor is even this all. For in this heart there would be no shedding abroad the sweet reviving influences of love; there would be no sealing it by the pressure of a moulding hand to the day of redemption. So that such a heart must harden daily. The law of evil must daily pervade it more thoroughly, until it comes to choose sin as sin: whilst from such a state there is nothing to awaken it. And this is the awful, hopeless, rayless, outer darkness of the full and final impenitence of a reasonable soul which has failed utterly in its moral probation. Here, then, we reach the consummation of this course. It leads down to an impenitent despair. At this point, then, let us for a moment pause, and see the conclusion we have reached. It is, that this state of final, hopeless impenitence is the natural conclusion of a life spent under the influences of God's Blessed Spirit by a reasonable moral agent, who by his neglect of or resistance to them, makes them turn into his uttermost condemnation. For as death can come to no man by chance, as the time of closing his day of trial must be exactly and certainly fixed for every man by God's sovereign Will, does it not necessarily follow from the fact of God having placed him in this probation, that no man is taken from his life of trial with the trial incomplete? that no branch in the living Vine is taken away until it is indeed certain that it will bear no fruit. In fine, instead of its being a rare and uncommon thing for men to reach a state of final impenitence, it is the real and most awful secret of every hopeless death. And if this be so, with what a dreadful character does this truth invest every allowance of wilful sin in us Christians! That probation differs, of course, necessarily in every different man. The same act of sin may embody in itself, in the case of two different men, utterly different degrees of resistance to the Holy Spirit. Such is the lesson taught us by the examples set before us in God's Word. Yet two such examples at least there are set before us in its pages—that of Saul in the Old Testament, and that of Judas in the New. In the history of Saul are traced with minuteness of detail the gifts of grace against which his sins of self-will and rebellion against

Gad had been committed, until "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Thenceforward the features of one whose heart was hardening look ever out upon us from his life. And to what an end does all this bring him! Who can read unmoved the record of those wild throbbings of despair which drove him, who in his better day had cut off those that had familiar spirits and the wizards from the land, to the sorceress at Endor; or the history of all that there awaited him? The deceitful tempter, now turned into the merciless accuser, took up the fierce utterance of that still hard though broken heart—"I am sore distressed," etc. Here is no mingling of mercy with judgment, no call to repentance, no sweet whisper of pardon. These, then, are our lessons from this fearful subject. First, that we strive diligently to maintain such a temper of watchful observance for the motions of the Blessed Spirit as that we may never unawares resist or neglect any of His lightest intimations. Without this watchful observance we are sure to interrupt His work. For if the soul be heated with worldliness, or covered with the dust of the earth, how shall it receive those heavenly colours with which He would brighten and adorn it? if it be perpetually distracted by ten thousand cares, how shall it be ready to entertain His presence? Lastly, if through our exceeding feebleness we have fallen, let us learn to look straight to the cross of Christ, and strive diligently in His strength to arise again; that we fly to Him as for our lives, crying only to Him out of our low estate, "Forsake not, O Lord, the work of Thine own hands:" "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." (*Bishop Wilberforce.*)

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 3. What do these Hebrews here?—*One question with two meanings:*—David was almost at the lowest point of his fortunes when he fled into foreign territory. The Philistine commanders, very naturally, were suspicious of these allies, just as Englishmen would have been if, the night before Waterloo, a brigade of Frenchmen had deserted and offered their help to fight Napoleon. So the question, "What do these Hebrews here?"—amongst our ranks—was an extremely natural one, and it was answered in the only possible way, by the subsequent departure of David and his men from the unnatural and ill-omened alliance. Now, that suggests to us that Christian people are out of their places, even in the eyes of worldly people, when they are fighting shoulder to shoulder with them in certain causes; and it suggests the propriety of keeping apart. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." "What do these Hebrews here?" is a question that Philistia often asks. But now turn to the other question. Elijah had fallen into the mood of depression which so often follows great nervous tension. The usually undaunted prophet, in the reaction after the great effort, was fearful for his life, and deserted his work, and flung himself into solitude, and shook the dust off his feet against Israel. Was that not just doing what I have been saying that Christian people ought to do—separating himself from the world? In a sense yes, and the voice came, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" "Go back to your work; to Ahab, to Jezebel." "Go back to death if need be. Do not shirk your duty on the pretence of separating yourself from the world." So we put the two questions together. They limit one another, and they suggest the *via media*, the course between, and lead me to say one or two plain things about that duty of Christian separation from an evil world. I. The first thing I would suggest to you is **THE INEVITABLE INTER-MINGLING, WHICH IS THE LAW OF GOD, AND THEREFORE CAN NEVER BE BROKEN WITH IMPUNITY.** Christ's parable about the Kingdom of Heaven in the world being like a man that sowed good seed in his field, which sprung up intermingled with tares, contains the lesson, not so much of the purity or non-purity of the Church as of the inseparable intertwining in the world of Christian people with others. Society at present, and the earthly form of the Kingdom of God, are not organised on the basis of religious affinity, but upon a great many other things, such as family, kindred, business, a thousand ties of all sorts. There are types of Christian life

to-day unwholesomely self-engrossed, and too much occupied with their own spiritual condition, to realize and discharge the duty of witnessing, in the world. Wherever you find a Christian man that tries more to keep himself apart, in the enjoyment and cultivation of his own religious life, than to fling himself into the midst of the world's worst evil, in order to fight and to cure it, you get a man who is sharing in Elijah's transgression, and needs Elijah's rebuke. The intermingling is inevitable in the present state of things. II. And now let me say a word about the second thing, and that is—**THE IMPERATIVE SEPARATION**. "What do these Israelites here?" is the question. What do we do when we are left to do as we like? Where do we go? When the half-cwt. fastened by the bit of string is taken off the sapling it starts back to its original uprightness. Is that what your Christianity does? Let us look at the spirit. Where do I turn to? What do I like to do? Where are my chosen companions? What are my recreations? Is my life of such a sort as that the world will turn to me and say, "What! you here!" "A man is known by the company he keeps," says an old Latin proverb, and I am bound to say that I do not think it is a good sign of the depth of a Christian professor's religion if he feels himself more at home in the company of the people that do not share his religion than in the company of those that do. There are two questions which every Christian professor ought to ask himself about such subjects. One is, Can I ask God to bless this, and my doing it? And the other is, Does this help or hinder my religion? III. Now there is one last suggestion that I wish to make, and that is **THE DOUBLE QUESTIONING THAT WE SHALL HAVE TO STAND**. The lords of the Philistines said, "What do these Hebrews here?" They saw the inconsistency, if David and his men did not. They were sharp to detect it, and David and his band did not rise in their opinion. So let me tell you, you will neither recommend your religion nor yourselves to men of the world, by inconsistently trying to identify yourselves with them. The world respects an out-and-out Christian; and neither God nor the world respects an inconsistent one. But there is another question, and another questioner—"What dost thou here, Elijah?" That question is put to us all in the moment when we are truest to our professions and ourselves. What do you think you would say if, in some of these moments of unnecessary intermingling with questionable things and doubtful people, you were brought suddenly to this, that you had to formulate into some kind of plausibility your reason for being there? Let us cleave to Christ, and that will separate us from the world. If we cleave to the world, that will separate us from Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXX.

Vers. 1—31. When David and his men were come to Ziklag.—*David in three situations*:—at Ziklag in his distress, on his way to the Amalekites, and among the Amalekites. I. **DAVID IN HIS DISTRESS**. See in it the frequent benefit of affliction to the people of God. In this instance it did immediately two things for David. 1. It restored him to his spiritual courage and strength. Look once more to chap. xxvii. We find there his heart failing him; and, like a frightened deer, he runs away from Judah into the land of the Philistines. Now when did this happen? You will say, "Doubtless when Saul was close behind him ready to take his life;" but no; it was at a time when it seemed least likely to happen—when David had humbled Saul to the dust by his magnanimity. David says in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul," and there goes the once bold champion of Israel, timid and crouching, to seek the protection of a heathen king. See here what man is; see what even a servant of God is, when left to himself. He can fall down without a blow. Now, come again to the chapter before us. Here is this same David, the frightened runaway, calm and fearless, and where? In a situation of the utmost distress and danger; with his home burnt, his family in the hands of his enemies, and with six hundred half frantic men around him threatening to take his life. O, how God sometimes glorifies his grace in our world! "What time I am afraid," not in a quiet hour, no, in a

fearful hour—"what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." 2. David's affliction restored him also to a holy caution and self-distrust. It led him, though he feared nothing else, to fear himself. He seeks now counsel of the Lord. We should have expected him to have done this before in his fear when he fled into the land of the Philistines, or when he followed the army of Achish against Israel, but he did not do it. "David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue this troop? shall I overtake them?" This is what the Scripture means by acknowledging God in our ways. And thus the affliction of David was a benefit to him—it restored him to his spiritual courage and strength, it led him to seek counsel of the Lord and submit his ways to Him. In His people's case, the Lord turns even these bitter things to a blessed account. So does He love His people, that He cannot even smite them without blessing them. His very judgments become mercies. Thus we find David, in Psalm ci. coupling together mercy and judgment, and saying He will rejoice in both and sing of both. II. Let us now look at David in another situation—ON HIS WAY TO THE AMALEKITES. We shall see that he met in it with discouragement and also encouragement, a mixture of both. 1. The discouragement he encountered at the outset. We know not the number of these Amalekites, but it is clear that it was great, for those that escaped, ver. 17 says, were four hundred, and they are spoken of as a remnant, a small part of the whole. These soldiers, these fugitives and exiles, can not only weep as though their hearts would break for their wives and children, but the moment there is a prospect of recovering them, they are so eager in the pursuit, that one-third of their number speedily sink down in exhaustion. "They came," we read, "to the brook Besor," and there they "were so faint that they could not go over." But how will this operate on David? Will not his old fears now return? Shall we not see him halting and hesitating and perhaps turning back? No; a man never hesitates or turns back in the path of duty, who is making the Lord his strength. 2. David's encouragement. And let me say that in your journey to heaven, or in setting about any good work on that journey, you must calculate on meeting with both these things, with both discouragements and encouragements. Your path will not be a uniform one. David's discouragement was the loss of two hundred men, apparently a formidable loss; it turned out nothing. His encouragement was what? It came from one man, one sick man, a man scarcely alive; and he did all that David wanted. The case was this. One of the Amalekites in going from Ziklag, had a slave ill, an Egyptian. He abandons him, leaves him in a field to die. Three days afterwards David's men come up and find him: they kindly give him food and restore him. "Can you tell us," asks David, "where we may find the Amalekites?" "I can," the man says, and in a little time he brings him within sight of their camp. Here, you observe, was help for David from one who could not help himself; and, as it turned out, effectual help; and help, observe, too, from the very host of his enemies. Any thing will serve the Lord when the Lord has to overthrow his enemies or help His people. He needs not move heaven or earth, he needs not create powerful instruments to do it; any thing in his mighty hand will do it—a castaway thing, a despised, abandoned thing. III. But look now at David in a third situation—AT THE CAMP OF THE AMALEKITES. When he came upon them, he found them in a state of riot and disorder. "Peace and safety" are fearful words in a pleasure-taking, prosperous man's mouth; then often "sudden destruction cometh, and he shall not escape." Belshazzar revelled joyously and fearlessly in the banquet he had made; but "in that night," the very night of his festivity, "was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain." And mark—it was the great spoil these Amalekites had taken which so rejoiced them. They were exulting in their spoil at the very moment when they were about to lose their spoil and their lives together. Is there a man here whose chief joy is in the spoil he has taken? the acquisitions he has made? his honours or his wealth? Let such a man see that he and they may be separated in an hour. To-morrow they may be in other hands, and he in another world. David, we read, smote these Amalekites, smote them from the twilight of one day even unto the evening of the next. Their destruction was complete or nearly so. You remember who these men were. They were a nation condemned by God to be exterminated in consequence of their determined hatred to Him and His people. David knew this. He was not therefore indulging his own revenge, but obeying the Lord's command, in smiting them. But observe—though these men were God's enemies, He had just before employed them in His work. There is a servant of His to be chastened; they shall be the rod in His hand to chasten

him. "We will go and plunder Ziklag," they say; He lets them go, and while they are accomplishing their ends, He makes them accomplish His; He overrules their plundering incursion to bring back the wandering David to Himself. It is a solemn thought, but it is a glorious one, that wicked men and wicked spirits, that hell with its legions as well as heaven with its glorious hosts, are doing every hour Jehovah's work. This must not reconcile us to sin, but it goes far to quiet the mind when sickened and distressed with the sin, "the wrong and outrage," with which the world is filled. Another incident in this history we must notice—this victory over these Amalekites was attended with a recovery of all that David had lost. Twice this is mentioned and particularly mentioned. It is not only we who are safe in God's hands if we are his, all that belongs to us is safe there. It is safe no where else. When we give it up to him, He remembers that we have done so, and takes it as His charge. There is an hour coming when God will let us see that He has taken good care of all that is ours as well as of us, such care as we had scarcely thought of. The health we have lost in His service, the property we may have expended in His cause, the earthly gain or earthly love or honour we have sacrificed for His sake—we shall hear of them again in heaven. O what a recompence for them awaits us there! (C. Bradley, M.A.)

Ver. 6. **David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.**—*David encouraged himself in God*:—I. DAVID'S DISTRESS. 1. David was greatly distressed, for he had been acting without consulting his God. Perhaps some of you are in distress in the same way: you have chosen your own path, and now you are caught in the tangled bushes which tear your flesh. You have carved for yourselves, and you have cut your own fingers; you have obtained your heart's desire, and while the meat is yet in your mouth a curse has come with it. You say you "did it for the best;" ay, but it has turned out to be for the worst. 2. Worse than this, if worse can be, David had also followed policy instead of truth. The Oriental mind was, and probably still is, given to lying. Easterns do not think it wrong to tell an untruth; many do it habitually. Just as an upright merchant in this country would not be suspected of a falsehood, so you would not in the olden time have suspected the average Oriental of ever speaking the truth if he could help it, because he felt that everybody else would deceive him, and so he must practise great cunning. The golden rule in David's day was, "Do others, for others will certainly do you." 3. Yet was his distress the more severe on another account, for David had sided with the enemies of the Lord's people. 4. Picture the position of David, in the centre of his band. He has been driven away by the Philistine lords with words of contempt; his men have been sneered at—"What do these Hebrews here? Is not this David?" "What do these Hebrews here?" is the sarcastic question of the world. "How comes a professing Christian to be acting as we do?" 5. At the back of this came bereavement. His wives were gone. II. DAVID'S ENCOURAGEMENT: "And David encouraged himself." That is well, David! He did not at first attempt to encourage anybody else; but he encouraged himself. Some of the best talks in the world are those which a man has with himself. He who speaks to everybody except himself is a great fool. I think I hear David say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I will yet praise him." David encouraged himself. But he encouraged himself "in the Lord his God," namely, in Jehovah. That is the surest way of encouraging yourself. David might have drawn, if he had pleased, a measure of encouragement from those valiant men who joined him just about this particular time; for it happened, according to 1 Chronicles xii. 19-20, that many united with his band at that hour. If you are in trouble, and your trouble is mixed with sin, if you have afflicted yourselves by your backslidings and perversities, nevertheless I pray you look nowhere else for help but to the God whom you have offended. When He lifts his arm, as it were, to execute vengeance, lay hold upon it and He will spare you. Does He not Himself say, "Let him lay hold on My strength?" I remember old Master Quarles has a strange picture of one trying to strike another with a flail, and how does the other escape? Why, he runs in and keeps close, and so he is not struck. It is the very thing to do. Close in with God. Cling to Him by faith: hold fast by Him in hope. Say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Resolve, "I will not let Thee go." Let us try to conceive of the way in which David would encourage Himself in the Lord his God. 1. Standing amidst those ruins he would say, "Yet the Lord does love me, and I

love Him." 2. Then he went further, and argued, "Hath not the Lord chosen me? Has He not ordained me to be king in Israel? Do you need an interpretation of this parable? Can you not see its application to yourselves? 8. Then he would go over all the past deliverances which he had experienced. III. DAVID ENQUIRING OF GOD. 1. Observe, that David takes it for granted that his God is going to help him. He only wants to know how it is to be done. "Shall I pursue? shall I overtake?" 2. It is to be remarked, however, that David does not expect that God is going to help him without his doing his best. He enquires, "Shall I pursue? shall I overtake?" 3. David also distrusted his own strength, though quite ready to use what he had; for he said, "Shall I overtake?" Can my men march fast enough to overtake these robbers?" IV. DAVID'S ANSWER OF PEACE. The Lord heard his supplication. He says, "In my distress I cried unto the Lord and He heard me." Trust in the Lord your God. Believe also in his Son Jesus. Get rid of sham faith, and really believe. Get rid of a professional faith, and trust in the Lord at all times, about everything. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *David encouraging himself in God*:—I. He "encouraged himself in THE LORD HIS GOD"—THAT IS WHAT HE IS SAID TO HAVE DONE. 1. "In the Lord," observe. The first step towards real comfort in real sorrow is to feel it must come from God, and the next is to raise up our minds to God; to get them above the things which are distressing us. 2. "The Lord," observe again—Jehovah, as the capital letters in our Bibles indicate; the self-existent, everlasting, unchangeable, unlimited, all-sufficient God. 3. But a material point to be noticed here is David's connection with this high Being. It was "the Lord his God," in whom he encouraged himself. It implies clearly an acquaintance with God, some previous intercourse with him, and a connection formed between him and the soul. (1.) What he did is opposed to two things—first, to despondency in trouble, to a giving of ourselves up in it to inaction and despair. (2.) And this conduct of David is opposed also to a torpid waiting in affliction for comfort. He did not stand still, observe, for God to encourage him, he set about encouraging himself in God. II. NOW LET US LOOK AT THE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH DAVID DID WHAT IS HERE ASCRIBED TO HIM. The text itself draws our attention to these. "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God;" he did so notwithstanding the circumstances in which he was placed. 1. Notwithstanding his great sorrow and distress. We sometimes think that soldiers have not hearts, but we cannot read this chapter and think so. The men on their return to their desolated homes were overwhelmed with grief. The loss of their wives and children completely unmanned them. 2. David encouraged himself in the Lord notwithstanding his sinfulness. We are not told so, but there must have been a voice there which said, "All this is my own doing. It is all the fruit of my own folly and sin. Had I but trusted my God and remained in Judah, or even had I stayed here in Ziklag, this would not have come to pass." He did not simply make an effort to encourage himself, he actually encouraged himself, found encouragement for himself, in the Lord his God. It must have been in some such moment as this that he first felt, if not said, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness has afflicted me." (C. Bradley, M.A.) *The secret of courage*:—Now the first thing I notice is I. THE GRAND ASSURANCE WHICH THIS MAN GRIPPED FAST. It is not by accident, nor is it a mere piece of tautology, that we read "the Lord his God." For, if you will remember, the very keynote of the psalms which are ascribed to David is just that expression, "My God," "My God." So far as the very fragmentary records of Jewish literature go, it would appear as if David was the very first of all the ancient singers to grapple that thought that he stood in a personal, individual relation to God, and God to him. And so it was his God that he laid hold of at that dark hour. Now I am not putting too much into a little word when I insist upon it that the very essence and nerve of what strengthened the king, at that supreme moment of desolation, was the conviction that welled up in his heart that, in spite of it all, he had a grip of God's hand as his very own, and God had hold of him. I would not go to the length of saying that the living realisation, in heart and mind, of this personal possession of God is the difference between a traditional and vague profession of religion and a vital possession of religion, but if it is not the difference, it goes a long way towards explaining the difference. The man who contents himself with the generality of a Gospel for the world, and who can say no more than that Jesus Christ died for all, has yet to learn the most intimate sweetness, and the most quickening and

transforming power, of that Gospel, and he only learns it when he says, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." II. **THE SUFFICIENCY OF THIS ONE CONVICTION AND ASSURANCE.** Here is one of the many eloquent "buts" of the Bible. On the one hand is piled up a black heap of calamities, loss, treachery, and peril; and opposed to them is only that one clause: "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." God is enough; whatever else may go. The Lord his God was the sufficient portion for this man when he stood a homeless pauper. So for poverty, loss, the blasting of earthly hopes, the crushing of earthly affections, the extremity of danger, and the utmost threatening of death, here is the sufficient remedy—that one mighty assurance: "The Lord is my God." For if He is the strength of my heart, He will be my portion for ever. He is not poor who has God for his, nor does he wander with a hungry heart who can rest his heart on God's; nor need he fear death who possesses God, and in Him eternal life. You never know the good of the breakwater until the storm is rolling the waves against its outer side. Put a little candle in a room, and you will not see the lightning when it flashes outside, however stormy the sky, and seamed with the fiery darts. If we have God in our hearts, we have enough for courage and for strength. III. **THE EFFORT BY WHICH THIS ASSURANCE IS ATTAINED AND SUSTAINED.** The words of the original convey even more forcibly than those of our translation the thought of David's own action in securing him the hold of God as his. He "strengthened himself in the Lord his God." The Hebrew conveys the notion of effort, persistent and continuous; and it tells us this, that when things are as black as they were round David at that hour—it is not a matter of course, even for a good man, that there shall well up in his heart this tranquillising and victorious conviction; but he has to set himself to reach and to keep it. God will give it, but he will not give it unless the man strains after it. He "strengthened himself in the Lord," and if he had not set doggedly about resisting the pressure of circumstances, and flinging himself as it were, by an effort, into the arms of God, circumstances would have been too many for him, and despair would have shrouded his soul. In the darkest moment it is possible for a man to surround himself with God's light, but even in the brightest it is not possible to do so unless he makes a serious effort. That effort may consist mainly in two things. One is that we shall honestly try to occupy our minds, as well as our hearts, with the truth which certifies to us that God is, in very deed, ours. If we never think, or think languidly and rarely, about what God has revealed to us by the Word and life and death and intercession of Jesus Christ, concerning Himself, His heart of love towards us, and His relations to us, then we shall not have, either in the time of disaster or of joy, the blessed sense that He is indeed ours. If a man will not think about Christian truth he will not have the blessedness of Christian possession of God. There is no mystery about the road to the sweetness and holiness and power that may belong to a Christian. The only way to get them is to be occupied, far more than most of us are, with the plain truths of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. If you can never think about them they cannot affect you, and they will not make you sure that God is yours. There is another thing which we have to make an effort to do, if we would have the blessedness of this conviction filling and flooding our hearts. For the possession is reciprocal; we say, "My God," and He says, "My people." Unless we yield ourselves to Him and say, "I am Thine," we shall never be able to say, "Thou art mine." We must recognise His possession of us; we must yield ourselves; we must obey; we must elect Him as our chief good, we must feel that we are not our own, but bought with a price. And then when we look up into the heavens thus submissive, thus obedient, thus owning His authority, and His rights, as well as claiming His love and His tenderness, and cry; "My Father," He will bend down and whisper into our hearts: "Thou art My beloved son." Then we shall be strong, and of a good courage, however weak and timid, and we shall be rich, though, like David, we have lost all things. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Features of David's faith*:—I. **THE REALITY OF DAVID'S FAITH.** It proved its reality by its power to enhearten him. It inspired him with courage; it rallied the scattered, prostrated powers of his soul; it opened a pathway of hope for him; it braced him for the necessities of the occasion. II. This leads us to remark upon **THE SUFFICIENCY OF DAVID'S FAITH.** You may have a strong impression that in certain circumstances

you shall be helped, delivered, but the impression may be all a delusion, "the baseless fabric of a vision," a hallucination of the mind. David's faith was real subjectively, because it was sufficiently well-grounded objectively. He "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Faith separated from an adequate object is powerless; inspired by such an object—there is but One—it is mighty, puts heart into the weak, puts enthusiasm into the hopeless, laying hold upon God it is omnipotent. III. ANOTHER FEATURE OF DAVID'S FAITH IS ITS ACTIVITY, ITS ENERGY. David bestirred himself to appropriate the strength which the Object of his faith, and his faith in that Object, were calculated to inspire. "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God." What a blessed art this of self-encouragement in God. There is an attitude of faith which is passive. The language of its triumph then is the meek, "Thy will be done." But faith is active, lively. This is its characteristic feature. IV. LET US NOT FORGET THE PRACTICAL CHARACTER OF DAVID'S FAITH (from v. 7). It was no time to lie upon the earth; there was something to be done, and done at once. David's faith gave shape and force to his action. He calls for the ephod, enquires of the Lord, obtains a favourable response, pursues the Amalekites, rescues the captives, inflicts a crushing blow upon the captors. Application:—"Nil desperandum!" We may encourage ourselves and one another in the Lord our God. He is ours if we will but accept Him. In Jesus Christ He is our Lord and our God. And if we are thus to encourage ourselves, we should maintain a spirit of calm equanimity. (*Joseph Morris.*)

Vers. 11—13. **And they found an Egyptian in the field.**—*Christian beneficence*:—The debasing influence of prosperity and success, and the humanising tendency of disaster and distress, were never more strikingly contrasted than in the portion of sacred history to which the words that have now been read turn our attention. It exhibits to us, on the one hand, a most painful instance of savage cruelty and neglect, in the midst of triumph and gladness; and presents, on the other, a pleasing example of tenderness and sympathy in the season of sorrow and depression. With the exception of one circumstance, the case of this Egyptian youth is one which is daily presented to us, and makes constant appeals to our sympathy and beneficence. The exception to which I allude, is one for which we can never be sufficiently grateful to Him who appoints the bounds of our habitation. In this land of freemen, slavery is never added to the miseries of the wretched, and, in the gloomiest hour of poverty and distress, the consciousness of freedom is left to console the sufferer. But in this single, though invaluable, exception, the sufferings of this young Egyptian have many parallel in this vale of tears. The union of poverty and disease is one of the most common forms of human wretchedness; its bitterness may be estimated without any effort of fancy, and its anguish painted without the aid of the imagination. Poverty and sickness are presented to us so often in melancholy union, that, to describe them, is not to draw upon the fancy, but to copy the sad original. 1. The first and most obvious consideration that calls us to the exercise of humanity and mercy, is our own liability to those very ills which claim our sympathy and relief. Poverty and sickness are not exclusively incident to any particular individuals, among the children of men. They imply the absence of the frailest and most perishable blessings of our lot. 2. In the next place, you are aware that compassion to the afflicted poor is enjoined by the authority of the Gospel. The Divine author of Christianity was anointed to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, and the poor and the sorrowful were his constant care. His whole life was one grand act of benevolence; and whether we think of the purity of His motives, or the extent of His designs of good, or His indefatigable labours or His painful sufferings in the cause of humanity, we have before us a pattern of charity and mercy, the most affecting and instructive. And with His conduct, His doctrine most beautifully coincides. It breathes peace and goodwill to man; and it enforces on all His followers the same love which He Himself manifested to the sons of men. 3. I entreat you to remember, that our neglect of exercises of mercy to the afflicted will be the ground of that sentence which in the day of our last account will be pronounced upon us all. In terms which the simplest understanding may comprehend, but which no heart can bear without the deepest awe, the Judge of all has assured us that in that hour when we shall stand before Him, the most searching inquiries

will be made concerning our conduct to the child of want. (*John Johnston.*) *The outcast servant*:—You have here a lively picture of Satan's cast off servants, "And they found an Egyptian in the field." Unable any longer to be actively employed for his master, he is left to linger out a miserable existence. Never shall one of Christ's happy servants say, "My master left me." David now finds that he had been feeding a former enemy, that this man was one of the company who had pillaged and destroyed Ziklag: but never was any David a loser by ministering to an enemy. This Egyptian is now become his guide, and leads him to the spot where the Amalekites were feasting upon what they had carried off from Ziklag. "And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth." Having been three days without any pursuers, they conclude that all is now safe, and as if the world were their own, they are spread abroad upon all the earth. Do you know the set time when sinners are to be destroyed? It is just when they say, "Peace and safety" (1 Thess. v. 3), when they feel most secure, and in an hour when they think not. So was it with these miserable revellers. Oh! when David's Lord comes upon His enemies like a mighty man—when He comes to recover all the spoil, when He brings the solemn charge, "Ye have robbed God"—when all is restored to its rightful owner, then shall judgment return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it (Psalm xciv. 15). Do you think David could forget his two hundred faint soldiers? Not if David had any of the mind which is in Christ. No, the first act is to return to them, and salute them, or ask them how they did. But all who follow David are not like David: they would "thrust the weak with side and shoulder," and fain have all themselves. Oh! when you feel this greedy, covetous spirit, this rising fear, and jealous eye, lest another, whom you do not think so deserving, should get as much as you, remember it is the mark of an unclean animal, it is the feature of the children of Belial. Very different is the language of David and his true followers. "Then said David, Ye shall not do so," etc. Lovely law! worthy of King David, and of David's Lord! Yea, blessed be the God of all grace, "it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day." She that tarrieth at home still divides the spoil—her God reckons it her act, if it is only in her heart; yea, he graciously says, "The desire of a man is his kindness" (Prov. xix. 22). They shall part alike! the same Christ, the same Comforter, the same free gift, the same heaven. Neither did David forget any of his former friends. All who had ministered to him in his straits and difficulties shall find that he is not forgetful, nor ungrateful. To all places whither he and his men were wont to haunt, is a present sent. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. vi. 10). (*Helen Plumpton.*)

Ver. 20. **This is David's spoil.**—*David's spoil*:—David may be regarded as a very special type of our Lord Jesus Christ. I. WE BEGIN WITH THE FIRST OBSERVATION THAT, PRACTICALLY, ALL THE SPOIL OF THAT DAY WAS DAVID'S SPOIL, AND IN TRUTH, ALL THE GOOD THAT WE ENJOY COMES TO US THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS. 1. David's men defeated the Amalekites, and took their spoil, but it was for David's sake that God gave success to the band. 2. Moreover, David's men gained the victory over Amalek because of David's leadership. If he had not been there to lead them to the fight, in the moment of their despair they would have lost all heart, and would have remained amidst the burning walls of Ziklag a discomfited company. The Lord Jesus Christ has been here among us, and has fought our battle for us, and recovered all that we had lost by Adam's fall and by our own sin. They said of Waterloo that it was a soldier's battle, and the victory was due to the men; but ours is our Commander's battle, and every victory won by us is due to the great Captain of our salvation. And our Lord Jesus has recovered for us the future as well as the past. Our outlook was grim and dark indeed till Jesus came; but oh, how bright it is now that he has completed his glorious work! Death is no more the dreaded grave of all our hopes. Hell exists no longer for believers. Heaven, whose gates were closed, is now set wide open to every soul that believeth. We have recovered life and immortal bliss. II. THOSE GOOD THINGS WHICH WE NOW POSSESS, OVER AND ABOVE WHAT WE LOST BY SIN, COME

TO US BY THE LORD JESUS. And first, think: In Christ Jesus human nature is lifted up where it never could have been before. Man was made in his innocence to occupy a very lofty place. "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." The nearest being to God is a man. The noblest existence—how shall I word it?—the noblest of all beings is God, and the God-man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is with Him upon the throne. It is a wondrous honour this, that manhood should be taken into intimate connection, yea, absolute union with God! 2. Another blessing which was not ours before the fall, and therefore never was lost, but comes to us as a surplusage, is the fact that we are redeemed. 3. We shall be creatures who have known sin, and have been recovered from its pollution. We shall for ever remember the price at which we were redeemed; and we shall have ties upon us that will bind us to an undeviating loyalty to him who exalted us to so glorious a condition. 4. We receive blessings unknown to beings who have never fallen. 5. Again, to my mind it is a very blessed fact that you and I will partake of a privilege which would have been certainly unnecessary to Adam, and could not by Adam have been known, and that is, the privilege of resurrection. Our singular relation to God, and yet to materialism, is another rare gift of Jesus. God intended, by the salvation of man, and the lifting up of man into union with himself, to link together in one the lowest and the highest—his creation and himself. Materialism is somewhat exalted in being connected with spirit at all. When spirit becomes connected with God, and refined materialism becomes connected with a purified spirit, by the resurrection from the dead, then shall be brought to pass the uplifting of clay, and its junction with the celestial. 7. Our manifestation of the full glory of God is another of the choice gifts which the pierced hands of Jesus alone bestow. Principalities and powers shall see in the mystical body of Christ more of God than in all the universe besides. They will study in the saints the eternal purposes of God, and see therein His love, His wisdom, His power, His justice, His mercy blended in an amazing way. III. THAT WHICH WE WILLINGLY GIVE TO JESUS MAY BE CALLED HIS SPOIL. There is a spoil for Christ which every true-hearted followed of His votes to Him enthusiastically. 1. First, our hearts are His alone for ever. Of every believing heart it may be said, "This is David's spoil." 2. Now there is another property I should like King Jesus to have, and that is, our special gifts. I know one who, before his conversion, was wont to sing; and he often charmed the ears of men with the sweet music which he poured forth; but when he was converted he said, "Henceforth my tongue shall sing nothing but the praises of God." He devoted himself to proclaiming the gospel by his song, for he said, "This is David's spoil." Have you not some gift or other, dear friend, of which you could say, "Henceforth this shall be sacred to my bleeding Lord"? 3. Moreover, while our whole selves must be yielded to the Lord Jesus, there is one thing that must always be Christ's, and that is our religious homage as a church. 4. Lastly, have you not something of your own proper substance that shall be David's spoil just now? There was a man who, in the providence of God, had been enabled to lay by many thousands. He was a very rich and respected man. I have heard it said that he owned at least half-a-million; and at one collection, when he felt specially grateful and generous, he found a well-worn sixpence for the plate, for that was David's spoil! That was David's spoil. Out of all that he possessed, that sixpence was David's spoil! This was the measure of his gratitude! Judge by this how much he owed, or at least how much he desired to pay. Are there not many persons who, on that despicable scale, reward the Saviour for the travail of His soul? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 21—25. **And David came to the two hundred men which were so faint that they could not follow.**—*The statute of David for the sharing of the spoil*:—I. I shall begin by saying, first, that FAINT ONES OCCUR EVEN IN THE ARMY OF OUR KING. We have among us soldiers whose faith is real, and whose love is burning; and yet, for all that, just now their strength is weakened in the way, and they are so depressed in spirit, that they are obliged to stop behind with the baggage. 1. Possibly some of these weary ones had grown faint because they had been a good deal perplexed. David had so wrongfully entangled himself with the Philistine king, that he felt bound

to go with Achish to fight against Israel. They were perplexed with their leader's movements. I do not know whether you agree with me, but I find that half-an-hour's perplexity takes more out of a man than a month's labour. 2. Perhaps, also, the pace was killing to these men. They made forced marches for three days from the city of Achish to Ziklag. To us there may come multiplied labours, and we faint because our strength is small. 3. Worst of all, their grief came in just then. Their wives were gone. Although, as it turned out, they were neither killed nor otherwise harmed; yet they could not tell this, and they feared the worse. 4. Perhaps, also, the force of the torrent was too much for them. In all probability the brook Besor was only a hollow place, which in ordinary times was almost dry; but in a season of great rain it filled suddenly with a rushing muddy stream, against which only strong men could stand. These men might have kept on upon dry land, but the current was too fierce for them, and they feared that it would carry them off their feet and drown them. Therefore, David gave them leave to stop there and guard the stuff. 5. Yet these fainting ones were, after all, in David's army. Their names were in their Captain's Register as much as the names of the strong.

II. THESE FAINTING ONES REJOICE TO SEE THEIR LEADER RETURN. 1. David saluted the stay-at-homes. Our King's salutations are wonderful for their heartiness. He uses no empty compliments nor vain words. Every syllable from His lips is a benediction. Every glance of His eye is an inspiration. 2. David's courtesy was as free as it was true. When Christ comes into a company his presence makes a heavenly difference. Have you never seen an assembly listening to an orator, all unmoved and stolid? Suddenly the Holy Ghost hath fallen on the speaker, and the king himself has been visibly set forth among them in the midst of the assembly, and all have felt as if they could leap to their feet and cry, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" Then hearts beat fast, and souls leap high; for where Jesus is found his presence fills the place with delight. III. FAINT ONES HAVE THEIR LEADER FOR THEIR ADVOCATE. 1. First, do you notice, he pleads their unity? The followers of the son of Jesse are one and inseparable. David said, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us." "We are all one," says David. "God has given the spoil, not to you alone, but to us all. We are all one company of brothers." The unity of saints is the consolation of the feeble. One life is ours, one love is ours, one heaven shall be ours in our one Saviour. 2. David further pleaded free grace, for he said to them, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us." The gift of God is eternal life. Deny not to anyone of your brethren any comfort of the covenant of grace. 3. Then he pleaded their needfulness. He said, "These men abided by the stuff." No army fights well when its camp is unguarded. The kind of service which seems most commonplace among men is often the most precious unto God. Therefore, as for those who cannot come into the front places of warfare, deny them not seats of honour, since, after all, they may be doing the greater good. Remember the statute, "They shall part alike." 4. Notice that David adds to his pleading a statute. He makes a statute for those who are forced to stay at home because they are faint. Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus, He is always looking to the interests of those who have nobody else to care for them! Some of God's people are illiterate, and they have but little native talent. Some dear servants of God seem always to be defeated. They seem sent to a people whose hearts are made gross and their ears dull of hearing. Some saints are constitutionally depressed and sad; they are like certain lovely ferns, which grow best under a constant drip. Well, well, the Lord will gather these beautiful ferns of the shade as well as the roses of the sun; they shall share His notice as much as the blazing sunflowers and the saddest shall rejoice with the gladdest. If lawfully detained from the field of active labour this statute stands fast for ever, for you as well as for others: "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike." IV. NOW, FAINT ONES FIND JESUS TO BE THEIR GOOD LORD IN EVERY WAY. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Tarrying by the stuff*:—There is an impression abroad that the great rewards of the eternal world are to be given to the great heroes, the great philanthropists, the great statesmen—the great men, the great women. My text sets forth the idea that just as great rewards will come to those who stay at home and mind their own business, just as great

rewards to those who are never seen in the high places of the field, just as great rewards to those who are never heard of—garrison duty as important as duty at the front. "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff." A great many people are discouraged when they read the story of David and Joshua, and Paul and John Knox and Martin Luther; they say, "Those men had special opportunities; perhaps if I had had the same opportunities I might have done just as well; but I shall never be called to command the sun and moon to stand still; I will never be called to preach on Mars' Hill; I will never be called, as John Knox was, to make a queen tremble for her crimes; I will never preside over a hospital; my life is all common-place and humdrum." And many a woman says within herself, "Ah, you folks on the platform and in the pulpit are all the time talking about heroines, great women, and they were great, but they had a special opportunity; perhaps, if I had the same opportunity I might do just as well; my life is all humdrum, my life is to sew the button on, to prevent the children from being asphyxiated with the whooping-cough, to keep down the family expenses, to see that the meals are ready at the right time; I get no chance, it is all humdrum, humdrum." Woman, your reward in the eternal world will be just as great as that of Florence Nightingale, who was called by the soldiers in the camp "The Lady of the Lamp"; because passing through the hospitals she kindled up the darkness with this lamp, and ministered to the suffering, and they all said, "Here comes the lady of the lamp." Your reward in eternity will be just as great if you do your work where you are put as well as she did her work where she was put. Your reward will be just as great as that of Mrs. Hertzog, who endowed the theological seminary for the education of the young ministry. Ah, how many who had ten talents get no reward in the eternal world, and how many who had only one talent will have dominions committed to them! 1. Oh, what consolation there is there for all people who do unappreciated work! Here is a great merchant philanthropist; he is as good and generous as he is affluent; you know his name—do you know the name of his confidential clerk?—the man on whose fidelity that fortune was built up, so that he could accumulate his vast wealth and then generously distribute it? Oh, no, you don't know the name of the confidential clerk. Is he to get no reward? I tell you that in the eternal world the merchant prince, who distributed his millions will get no more reward than the confidential clerk. "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff." You know the names, I suppose, of the great presidents of railroads. Do you know the names of the brakeman, of the engineer, on whose wrist last night 300 lives hung; of the switchman, who, moving the switch three or four inches that way, and the whole train goes through in peace and families reach their homes in safety? A good many years ago a Christian woman was seen every eventide going along by the edge of the woods. She had a large family, and her neighbours said, "How can this woman, with all her cares and anxieties, waste her time going along the edge of the wood at eventide?" They did not find out until after her death why she went. She went there to pray for her household, and one evening, while there, she wrote that beautiful hymn sung in all our churches in America, and, I have no doubt, sung in your churches:—

I love to steal awhile away
From every cumbering care,
And spend the hours of setting day
In humble grateful prayer.

No minister of religion standing in European or American pulpit to-day giving out that hymn, will have more reward than that woman received for writing it. 2. There is great consolation in the subject for all those who used to be at the front in great enterprises of benevolence and religion. Why, when a subscription paper came round their name was at the top for a good big sum. When a revival came they would pray all night with the anxious. They were strong, healthy, affluent. But not now. Their fortune has collapsed, their health has gone, they are clear discouraged; they do not see how they can help God's work any more. Nay; look at those 200 men by the brook Besor. Just shove back the sleeve and show how the muscles were twisted in the battle. Just pull aside the turban and see the scar where the battle-axe struck. Just pull

aside the coat a little and see where the spear went in. They got just as much reward as those who went to the front, and you who were at the front in the old days had the health, the muscle, the high spirits for all that kind of work. God has not forgotten you. 8. What comfort this is for the aged! What have you got to do? Only to wait. Your reward will come. There is great consolation in this for all the aged ministers. I know some of them are preaching the Gospel. A man cannot preach the Gospel for fifty years without showing it in an illuminated countenance. Oh! there has got to be a re-adjustment of coronets; people who have no coronet in this world to be crowned; people who have great honours in this world to lose their coronet. Oh, there has got to be a redistribution of coronets! Shall not the child have a crown? the father a crown? the mother a crown? And all ye who are doing unappreciated work the day of your reward is coming. (T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.)

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 4. **Saul took a sword and fell upon it.**—*The death of Saul:*—Saul's life is a tragedy, and his death is the closing scene. Circumstances close round him, and press him to his doom. These circumstances know no remorse. They never pause for pity. The last foe that Saul meets is himself. His death was neither more nor less than suicide; the death of all deaths the most loathsome and despised of men; of all deaths the only one that men call cowardly. Yet to this Saul came, as if he had not been the anointed of the Lord, as if he never had been the glory of God's people Israel. The whole of the preceding history had a sound in it portentous of change and death. And Saul himself, better than any other man, was aware that his end was near; and he went on to that end in a most pitiable plight; a hero without a hero's hope. There is a singular fitness in the chapter which closes this life of Saul. There is no sentimental dallying with the tragic facts. The battle was set, and from the first the Philistines did the fighting. We need not dwell on the features of this tragedy. It was a great historical event, meaning much to the nation which saw its first king thus sadly fall. It was the end of Saul's kingdom: his sons and all his family, and, with them, all his hopes, died with him that night on Mount Gilboa. And it is still a conspicuous moral, as well as historical, event, on which we may well pause to look across the ages. Saul brought down thousands with him when he fell, but he had been lowering the tone of the spiritual nation almost from the time when he began his reign. The people had, indeed, got in him what they asked for—a king like unto their neighbours. And as he had been in his life in the land, so was he when he died at Gilboa. For "there was the shield of the mighty vilely cast away—the shield of Saul—as of one not anointed of the Lord." When we look at this life in its most general, human aspects, it is hard to escape the question: "Why did God bring Saul into all these circumstances of trial where he so ignobly failed and fell? Would it not have been better for Saul never to have been called from his father's plough?" There is something more serious by far than to be a king; it is more serious to be a man. If mere safety and immunity from trial and danger are all that are to be desired by us, we must needs rank ourselves with the irrational creation. But when we are made men we are called with a high calling. We have set before us an immortal destiny, either to work that out or wreck it away. We are all on our trial. The highest issues of human life are brought out by the greatness and the strength of our trials. So was it with Saul. His trial began with his great opportunity. The highness of his calling measures the deepness of his falling. There are three points which indicate the departure of Saul from the path of peace and duty. 1. He had not long reigned until he began to separate himself from good men in the land. He was soon separated from Samuel, the best, the noblest, the representative good man of the time. He was soon separate from David, the man of the future, the man after God's own heart, and who desired to do only

God's will. He was soon cruel and fierce in his wrath, slaying one by one the priests of the Lord. 2. Then we find that he was separate from God. He prayed to God, and God gave him no answer. He asked in vain for God's guidance, and then called in vain for the dead Samuel. 3. Last of all, Saul got separated from himself; from his own best nature. There was a great chasm in his nature, between his evil and his controlling, better self; and thus he was left to the wreck and ruin which his own worst nature prompted. Such is the spiritual history of him whose tragic life we have now read to its close. (*Armstrong Black.*) *Suicide*.—Our Creator, it is said, has given us a general desire to obtain good, and avoid evil; why may we not obey this impulse? We leave a kingdom, or a society, of which we do not approve; we avoid bodily pain by all the means which we can invent; why may we not cease to live, when life becomes a greater evil, than a good? Because, in avoiding pain, or in procuring pleasure, we are always to consider the good of others, as well as our own. Poverty is an evil, but we may not rob to avoid it; power is a good, but it is not justifiable to obtain it by violence, or deceit; we have only a right to consult our own good within certain boundaries, and after such a manner that we do not diminish the good of others: Every evil incapable of such limited remedy, it is our duty to bear; and if the general idea that we have a right to procure voluntary death to ourselves, be pregnant with infinite mischief to the interests of religion, and morality, it is our duty to live, as much as it is our duty to do anything else for the same reason; a single instance of suicide may be of little consequence; nor is a single instance of robbery of much; but we judge of single actions, by the probability there is of their becoming frequent, and by the effects they produce, when they are frequent. 1. Suicide, is as unfavourable to human talents, and resources, as it is to human virtues; we should never have dreamt of the latent power, and energy of our nature, but for the struggle of great minds with great afflictions, nor known the limits of ourselves, nor man's dominion over fortune: What would the world now have been, if it had always been said, because the archers smite me sore, and the battle goeth against me, I will die? Alas! man has gained all his joy by his pains; misery, hunger, and nakedness, have been his teachers, and goaded him on to the glories of civilised life; take from him his unyielding spirit, and if he had lived at all, he would have lived the most suffering creature of the forest. 2. Suicide has been called magnanimity; but what is magnanimity? A patient endurance of evil, to effect a proposed good; and when considering the strange mutability of human affairs, are we to consider this endurance as useless, or when should hope terminate but with life? To linger out year after year, unbroken in spirit, unchanged in purpose, is doubtless, a less imposing destiny than public, and pompous suicide; but if to be, is more commendable, than to seem to be; if we love the virtue, better than the name, then is it true magnanimity to extract wisdom from misery, and doctrine from shame; to call day, and night upon God; to keep the mind's eye sternly rivetted on its object through failure, and through suffering; through evil report, and through good report; and to make the bed of death the only grave of human hope; but at the moment when Christianity warns you that your present adversity may be a trial from God; when experience teaches that great qualities come in arduous situations; when piety stimulates you to show the hidden vigour, the inexhaustible resources, the beautiful capacities of that soul, which God has exempted from the destruction which surrounds it; at that moment, the law of self-murder gives you, for your resource, ignominious death, frightful disobedience, and never-ending torments. 3. It may be imagined that suicide is a crime of rare occurrence, but we must not so much overrate our love of life, when there is hardly a passion so weak, which cannot at times, overcome it; many fling away life from ambition, many from vanity, many from restlessness, many from fear, many from almost every motive; nature has made death terrible, but nature has made those evils terrible, from the dread of which we seek death; nature has made resentment terrible, infamy terrible, want terrible, hunger terrible; every first principle of our nature alternately conquers and is conquered; the passion that is a despot in one mind, is a slave in the other; we know nothing of their relative force. 4. It is hardly possible to conceive this crime, committed by any one who has not confounded his common notions of right and wrong by some previous sophistry, and cheated himself into a temporary scepticism; but who

would trust to the reasoning of such a moment in such a state of the passions, when the probability of error is so great, and the punishment so immeasurable? Men should determine, even upon important human actions, with coolness, and unimpeded thought; much less, then, is a rash and disturbed hour enough for eternity. 5. It has often been asked, if self-murder is forbidden by the Christian religion; but those who ask this question forget, that Christianity is not a code of laws, but a set of principles from which particular laws must frequently be inferred; it is not sufficient to say, there is no precise, and positive law, naming, and forbidding self-murder; there is no law of the gospel, which forbids the subject to destroy his ruler; but there is a law, which says, fear, and obey him; there is no law which prevents me from slaying my parents; but there is a law which says, love, and honour them; "be meek, says our Saviour;" "be long suffering; abide patiently to the last; submit to the chastening hand of God," and let us never forget, that the fifth, and greatest gospel is the life of Christ; that he acted for us, as well as taught, that in the deserts of Judea, in the hall of Pilate, on the supreme cross, his patience shows us, that evil is to be endured, and his prayers point out to us, how alone it can be mitigated. (*Sidney Smith, M.A.*) *Lessons from a suicide*:—There is always something solemn in doing things which, when done, cannot be undone—in taking steps which, when taken once, can never be recalled. We sign our contracts with a trembling hand; and enter into those bonds which least of all we desire to break, with a solemnity which arises from the thought that, once entered upon, we cannot recede. The act of suicide affords the most decisive evidence of the extensive delusion which men can practise on themselves, and of the blinding power which they permit the tempter to exercise over them, when, under the idea of relief and escape, they involve themselves in a deeper calamity, and in order to effect an oblivion of present suffering, they grasp the cup of eternal woe, and put it to their lips. "From what shall I escape?" is but one-half of the question—"Into what shall I bring myself?" is the still more momentous portion of the inquiry. 1. Looking at the circumstances of Saul's death in their connection with the history of the people over whom he reigned, it is impossible not to perceive that they were fraught with instruction to the nation, with lessons valuable though humiliating. They reiterate with deeper emphasis the truth—that when men are determined to have their own way—when they will not listen to heavenly suggestions, to Divine remonstrances—and when they think that they can manage better for themselves than God can manage for them, there is but one way of convincing them of their error. They must be allowed to take the problem of their peace and happiness into their own hands, to attempt to work it out in their own fashion, and then to reap the bitter results of failure, which in such a case are inevitable. Israel worked out their own problem, and they brought it to this issue—"And the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in Mount Gilboa," etc. And thus will it ever be, where men expect to reap more from their own theories than from God's fixed laws and plans. 2. We may take, as a second suggestion from the spectacle before us, the thought—How dreadful it is for a man to be in trouble without God to sustain and support him. The waves and billows were indeed going over Saul. We see here the acting out of one of those principles which regulate the Divine dealings with men. If they seek Him, He will be found of them; if they forsake Him, He will cast them off for ever. Fearful as is the lesson taught us by the self-murder of Saul, it is consolatory to know that no one need be in trouble without God. Precious promises point out the way in which we may be delivered from any such fear. 3. We see, in Saul's case, that there is no surer sign that a man is on the high road to ruin than that his heart is hardened against Divine warnings. Quickly, one after another, came solemn calls to the king of Israel to humble himself at last before God. We wait: and the thought rushes into our heart, "He will break down at last; he will stand out no longer. But it did not. And then it was seen that the heart which can stand out against solemn calls, ruin will be the result. "He that being often reproved," etc. It is a grievous miscalculation, moreover, which men make, when, conscious that life is passing on in the neglect of God and of duty, they reckon within themselves upon a certain power which they imagine the approach of death will have to awaken their attention to religious duties, and to bring with it the disposition

to return to God in repentance and prayer. 4. As we compare the conclusion of this history with its commencement, we cannot but discover an impressive lesson as to the influence of external circumstances upon personal character. As Saul rose in his social position, he sunk in his moral condition. It is dangerous to keep an idol for ourselves; it is not less perilous to become the idol of others. Never was there a man more frequently instructed in the lesson of entire dependence upon God. (*J. A. Miller.*)

Ver. 6. So Saul died and his three sons.—*Death of Saul and Jonathan:*—There is a proverb of the ancients, "Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad." Or, to express the same idea in the language of the Bible, "Be sure your sins will find you out." This was the truth brought out so forcibly in the last days, and especially in this death-scene, of Saul. 1. Saul was what the Bible calls a "reprobate." By that we do not mean that he was a man hurried forward to his doom by a blind fate, or lashed to such a doom against his will by the scourge of relentless furies. There is no such case in all the Bible. Yes, Saul was a sinner, and a persistent sinner—a sinner who sinned against light and knowledge, against providence and grace, against mercy and judgment. "God gave him over to strong delusions, to believe a lie." God will not force men to obey him—will not compel them to repent when they have done wrong. 4. God's retributions are slow but sure. It had been a long time since Saul committed that first grievous offence against God. There were years of apparent peace and prosperity, when God seemed to have forgotten his old curse, and when Saul might have thought that God had changed his mind and purpose. 3. To forsake God is to be lost. That was the fatal turning-point in Saul's history, both as a man and as the first king of Israel. There was everything to make him loyal to God. It was not the want of knowledge or the want of counsel that led him to stumble. It was a want of reverence for God as "King of kings." It was a want of will to do God's will, and a desire to follow the bent of his own heart in spite of all that God told him was right and wrong. So he forsook God. And what could God do, as a lover of truth and a lover of Israel, but forsake him. (*T. W. Hooper, D.D.*) *The dead march of Saul:*—1. We begin with this: "Sin, when it is finished, bringing forth death." The career of the first monarch Israel ever had is now actually completed: his life is a failure; the wrong beginning has reached the fatal end. The parallel has more than once been drawn between the rejected Saul and the Roman Brutus at Philippi. They seem to have had a warning in very similar terms the night before they died. And the terrible destruction of their respective forces, the entire rout and ruin of their cause, worked the same maddening result. Each fell on his own sword, and so sealed his guilt with suicide. One thinks of the story which naturalists tell concerning the scorpion, which, girded by the circle of fire, coils up on itself into narrower and narrower folds, till, when it can endure the heat no longer, it turns its deadly venom against itself and buries the sting of destruction in its own brain. Saul knew he must die before nightfall that day; it was not necessary he should let himself be tortured. 2. So there is a second text of God's Word illustrated here in the incident: "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." The lines and links of connection with bind us to our fellow-men are often very subtle, and sometimes unexpected; but they are certainly always very strong. We do not know that Saul cared much about others' interests, but his guilt was visited on many innocent souls. By a tradition of the Rabbins we are told that the armour-bearer mentioned here was named Doeg, and the tale adds that both of these men were slain by the same weapon, that was indeed the one with which the Lord's servants had been massacred at Nob. 3. Notice, therefore, closely in this connection that another of the Bible texts phrases for us a new lesson: "One sinner destroyeth much good." There was more in this tremendous catastrophe at Gilboa than an individual wreck. Great public interests were shaken almost as if the nation had been rocked by the force of an earthquake. Saul reaped the wind before he died, and when he died too; but it was his people that, with sickles of humiliation and loss and shame unutterable, reaped the whirlwind in his stead. 4. Happily there is another side even to this. We choose again from the utterances of inspiration, and we read, "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." It has been noticeable

in human history that the Almighty deals somewhat surprisingly with remnants; even in great devastations there is often left a seed that tries to serve him and retrieve the disasters. It does our hearts good just now to learn that Jabesh-gilead was aroused: somebody after all was alive in the land. A good turn often comes back again. Years before this Saul had saved the inhabitants of that town from losing their eyes at the hands of some brutal enemies; now they sent a faithful band to take reverently down from the spikes the bodies of the royal victims and give them decent burial at last. It is wiser always to side with the Lord of hosts, no matter how discouraging the present prospect may be. 5. Once more, we find an illustration also here of the text that has grown so familiar in our times: "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." (1) He lost his chance through his sinning against God. (2) He lost his chance: but ours remains to us yet; and this is of vast importance and demands our notice as living men. While the hours linger salvation is possible to any one who will come with patience seeking it, and even a great bad record may be blotted from the book of God's remembrance by the blood of Christ. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Saul's character and end*.—I. THE CHARACTER OF SAUL. 1. Proud preference of his own will to God's, carried out boldly in the life; deadly jealousy, that coloured and distorted his view of things, determined the special mould of his character and destiny, and threw over both deep shades of darkness; cruelty, that was causeless as against an innocent man, unnatural as against a son-in-law, sacrilegious, in smiting without scruple a whole city of priests with their families; impiety, that dared to stand up against God. Potentially the tyrant lurked in the king, the monster in the man. Circumstances alone would not, could not, make him such as he became. They helped to mould and colour his character, and gave it its peculiarity of aspect. But the regulating power lay within. From the same circumstances a different character would have been fabricated by a different disposition. Does not the same sunlight nourish Hemlock and All-heal, the Nettle and the Lily, the Thistle and the foodful Grain? Do not all flowers drink their own colours from the same flood of sunbeams? Even so, the plastic power of evil within employed for deadly harm the very circumstance which another would have turned to good and holy purposes. 2. His careless naturalism of heart. Let us call it by its Scripture name: "carnal mindedness." This was the warp on which were woven all the glaring designs of his life. His heart was never broken by a sense of sin, or melted with the love of God, or touched by the marvellous grace that shone in the economy of type and shadow. II. THE MORAL PURPOSES OF HIS REIGN. 1. Punitive. His whole reign was a judgment. Disaffection, despondency, internal strife, and enfeebled power, were but different aspects of the same black cloud. It was throughout a ministry of retribution. 2. Disciplinary. These terrible years had a forward as well as a backward look. The harvest of the past they were also the seed time of the future. (1) The Divine holiness was solemnly held forth. Every new infliction of judgment was a new demonstration of God's hatred of sin. (2) Conviction of sin. This would be the very result of an impression of Divine purity. The inference in a quickened conscience, would be immediate and pressing. Instinctively the contrast would be felt. The conviction of impurity would be the dark dreadful shadow of Divine intolerance of it. (3) Turning to God again. Left, for this dark series of years, to follow their own ways, with a king as they desired and such as they would have chosen, it was proved to them how foolish they were to separate themselves in the smallest measure from the God whose love had guarded them. They could not direct their own steps. It was suicidal weakness to think of walking alone. Their weary hearts looked wistfully back from the gloom that had settled on the land to that happier sunshine which now seemed gleaming on those vanished years of closer allegiance to God. 3. Instructive. (1) The meeting of two lines of providential agency in the accomplishment of a certain intended result—a principle which finds frequent illustration in the early history of the New Testament Church, as when Simeon and the Infant Saviour, Peter and Cornelius, Paul and Ananias, from different points, were borne divinely to a meeting. (2) The judicial arranging of events and circumstances so as to make the sources of perplexity, temptation, and ruin, to the wilful soul—an awful truth which has been repeating itself in actual life ever since Pharaoh, in his infatuation, hastened after Israel because "the wilderness had shut them in." But these truths, and

many like them, were developed by particular occurrences in the life of Saul. When that life is looked at as a whole, it yields most useful lessons for men of every age. 1. No change of circumstance can slacken God's hold of His creatures. Convincing proof of this might have been given by a character and history directly the opposite of Saul's. But doubly impressive is the demonstration made by a life like his. 2. No human institution can of itself bring real blessings to a people. The Hebrews fondly dreamed that royalty would bring with it healing for all social ills. In their case the dream was not only baseless, but signally dishonouring to God. In every case it is really so. The folly of it is written conspicuously on all history. It is taught clearly by our common sense. With multitudes, a bright vision of happiness seems hovering over some great political amelioration yet to come. And it is to be feared that the noble instinct of our nature, which craves for true enjoyment, is bidden fill itself here. Deluded multitudes, to set down an immortal nature to these husks of the prodigal! True happiness is a heavenly gift. It is madness to seek it growing among the political improvements or social amenities of earth. 3. No combination of outward advantages can save or sanctify the soul of man. We cannot well conceive a human being surrounded by greater and more powerful means of improvement than was the first king of Israel. 4. There is in human nature a tendency to growth in evil. Here, again, Saul stands for the race. And in him this growth is terribly conspicuous. The modest man has come to stand without shame in the light of a public exposure; and he who had been so winningly regardful of the life of rebels now pants for the blood of the righteous, and barbarously sacrifices to the Moloch of his passion the whole innocent population of a city. Keeping pace with the monstrous growth of evil, and probably accounting for it, we observe in him the gradual consolidation of infernal agency. The human nature refused to admit its full operation all at once. At first the dark influence came in pulses over him, like the sullen ripples of the sea of death on a boat's resisting sides. But soon that influence gained so thorough a mastery that all sounds of resistance ceased. With terrible facility the infernal power abated the reluctance of his nature, and at last identified itself so completely with him that all trace of a struggle vanished, and the occasional impulses of its first contact changed eventually to a steady and uniform influence. It would be comforting to believe that this appalling progressiveness was peculiar to Saul. But this consolation we dare not take. While differing from him in the line of descent, and in the circumstances, enormity, and visible effects of our growth in evil, that growth itself is beyond question. The heart gravitates to sin. A malign influence has breathed upon our race. As surely as the body of the new-born babe tends earthwards unsupported, its moral nature tends to corruption. Deeper and deeper it sinks into sin. Habit adds new strength to nature. Surrounding temptations hasten the speed of the soul's departure from God and holiness. How dreadful this downward pressure! What miracle has preserved the world from perishing by the excess of its own vices? A kindly Providence has done it. (*P. Richardson, B.A.*)

Ver. 8. The Philistines came to strip the slain.—*After the battle:*—Is there any sadder sight than a battle-field after the guns have stopped firing? A similar scene is described in our text. Before I get through to-day I will show you that the same process is going on all the world over, and every day, and that when men have fallen, Satan and the world, so far from pitying them or helping them, go to work remorselessly to take what little there is left, thus stripping the slain. There are tens of thousands of young men every year coming from the country to our great cities. They come with brave hearts and grand expectations. But our young man has a fine position in a dry-goods store. The month is over. He gets his wages. He is not accustomed to have so much money belonging to himself. He is a little excited, and does not know exactly what to do with it, and he spends it in some places where he ought not. Soon there come up new companions and acquaintances from the bar-rooms and the saloons of the city. Soon that young man begins to waver in the battle of temptation, and soon his soul goes down. In a few months, or few years, he has fallen. He is morally dead. Why do the low fellows of the city now stick to him so closely? Is it to help him back to a moral and spiritual life? Oh, no! I will tell you why they stay; they are Philistines

stripping the slain. The point I want to make is this: Sin is hard, cruel, and merciless. Instead of helping a man up, it helps him down; it will come and steal your sword and helmet and shield, leaving you to the jackal and the crow. But the world and Satan do not do all their work with the outcast and abandoned. A respectable impenitent man comes to die. He could not get up if the house was on fire. What does Satan do for such a man? Why, he fetches up all the inapt, disagreeable and harrowing things in his life. He says: "Do you remember those chances you had for heaven, and missed them? Do you remember all those lapses in conduct?" And then he takes all the past and empties it on that death-bed, as the mail-bags are emptied on the post-office floor. The man is sick. He cannot get away from them. Come, now, I will tear off from you the last rag of expectation. I will rend away from your soul the last hope. I will leave you bare for the beating of the storm. It is my business to strip the slain. Sin is a luxury now; it is exhilaration now; it is victory now. But after a while it is collision; it is defeat; it is extermination; it is jackalism; it is robbing the dead; it is stripping the slain. Give it up to-day—give it up! (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)